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PLINY'S LETTERS

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BY THE

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ADVERTISEMENT.

MANY of the translations in this volume are our own. Sometimes we have borrowed from the versions of Lord Orrery and Melmoth. Occasionally we have had the advantage, of which we beg to express our hearty appreciation, of the versions which Dean Merivale gives in his 'History of the Romans under the Empire.'

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

As this work is not arranged in a regular biographical form, it seems advisable to give a brief sketch of the main events in the life of the Author of these Letters. Most of these events the reader will find related at greater length as he proceeds.

Pliny the younger was born A.D. 62. In A.D. 79 he witnessed the great eruption of Vesuvius. In the following year he commenced practice as an advocate in Rome. For a short time he served as a military tribune in Syria. Returning to Rome, he was made Quæstor; and in A.D. 93, Prætor. In A.D. 100, he was Consul. He also filled at some time the office of Prefect of the Treasury, and he was one of the Commissioners of the Tiber. He belonged to the College of Augurs. In A.D. 103, he went as Proprætor to the province of Pontus and Bithynia, an office which he held for about two years. We know nothing of him later than the year 107. He was twice married, but left no children.

PLINY'S LETTERS.

CHAPTER I.

PLINY'S EARLY DAYS—SKETCH OF THE REIGNS OF VESPASIAN AND TITUS—PLINY THE ELDER.

No reading can be pleasanter or more instructive than the correspondence of a clever and accomplished man, whose circumstances have brought him into continual contact with the politics and literature of his day. Cicero's letters are certainly among the most interesting remains of antiquity. Those of the younger Pliny are indeed the work of a man many degrees intellectually inferior to Cicero, but they have deservedly found many attentive readers in modern times. They throw much light on that period of transition in the history of mankind which began with the origin and rise of the Christian Church; and, as we read them, we feel that there is something in their general tone and character which makes them a sort of link between the old and new worlds.

Caius Plinius Cæcilius Secundus—such was his full Roman name—is familiarly known as "the younger Pliny," to distinguish him from his uncle, and father by adoption, the famous naturalist. His mother, Plinia, was this uncle's sister. His father, Caius Cæcilius, was a man of no note, but of a good old Roman stock. The Cæcilian family, though of plebeian origin, had been for centuries an honourable house, and could reckon consuls and great state officials among its scions. The most illustrious name connected with it was that of the Metelli. It was also wealthy; so that Pliny entered the world under good auspices. We have to pick out from his own letters all that can be known about him. He was, he tells us, in his eighteenth year when that memorable eruption of Vesuvius, A.D. 79, destroyed the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. He was therefore born A.D. 62, a year in which the wickedness and infamy of Nero were rising to their utmost height. Comum, now Como, on the lake of that name, was the place of his birth, as may be inferred with almost absolute certainty from various passages in his letters. His family, it would seem, had considerable estates in the neighbourhood; and their relations to the town and its inhabitants were much the same as those of a great English landowner to a borough closely connected with his property. The early death of his father was possibly the cause of his future distinction. His uncle, after the Roman fashion, adopted him as his son, and imbued him with a love of letters, and an earnest desire of entering on an honourable career. He had likewise the good

fortune to have as his guardian a truly great man—Verginius Rufus—to whom we shall have occasion to refer more at length when we come to speak of Pliny's friends. As a matter of course, the best education which the age could furnish was provided for him. He attended the lectures of the most famous teachers of the day—of Quintilian among the number. He must have been a precocious lad, as he tells us that he wrote a Greek tragedy in his fourteenth year, and that he began to practise as an advocate at nineteen. His early success was no doubt due to his remarkable industry as well as to his great social advantages.

The years of his childhood and youth were terrible and eventful for the state. The latter period of Nero's reign was an undisguised despotism, which indulged itself without restraint in freaks of senseless and capricious wickedness. The year A.D. 68 delivered the world from the last * and worst of the Cæsars. That same year witnessed a great rising in the armies of Gaul and of Lower Germany; and the empire was actually offered by the troops on the Rhine to young Pliny's guardian, Verginius Rufus. He declined it; and Servius Galba, who had been governor of one of the provinces of Spain, and was a favourite with the soldiers, became emperor. Thus was effected a complete revolution. Men chosen by the soldiers were henceforth to rule the Roman world. The secret of the

* So Suetonius terms him, as the last of the Julia gens—that is, of the family of Julius Cæsar, whether connected with it by blood or adoption. Commonly the first twelve emperors are called "the twelve Cæsars."

empire, as Tacitus says in one of the opening chapters of his History, was now divulged,—that an emperor might be created elsewhere than at Rome. The following year was one of continuous civil war. It comprises the brief reigns of Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and is minutely described by Tacitus. It was a time of horrible bloodshed and confusion. "I am entering," says the historian, "on a period rich in disasters, frightful in its wars, torn by civil strife, and even in peace full of horrors." With its close, which witnessed the establishment of the Flavian dynasty, began a more hopeful era. Vespasian, the first representative of that dynasty, was called to the empire by the Roman legions in the east, to the command of which he had been appointed at the commencement of the Jewish war. A man of humble birth, he attained greatness by his energy and perseverance. He was an able general, and he retained through life the plain and straightforward character of a good soldier. His good sense and firmness enabled him to repress or mitigate some of the worst evils of the time; and his reign was on the whole a decided benefit to the Roman world.

Vespasian was Emperor from A.D. 70 to 79. During these years Pliny was diligently pursuing his studies under the direction of the best of teachers. The Emperor himself was a man of no culture or refinement, but he was shrewd enough to see that it was for the public good that men of letters should be encouraged. He had the reputation of being parsimonious to a fault, but he knew when to be munificent. He founded a public library, and liberally pensioned poets and

artists, professors of grammar and rhetoric. Quintilian, the most successful teacher of the day, rose, contrary to all precedent, to the consulship. We may well imagine what a shock it must have been to an old-fashioned Roman nobleman to see a schoolmaster raised to the highest dignity in the state. Vespasian no doubt felt that the surest way to make his government popular was to conciliate the goodwill of the men who directed the education of the Roman youth. He could do nothing with the philosophers, whose political creed, that especially of the Stoics, was a fanatical republicanism, utterly impracticable, and at the same time restless and aggressive. He was obliged to treat them as enemies who were plotting the overthrow of his government. Of the fate of Helvidius Priscus, the most eminent, perhaps also the noblest and most conscientious, of the Stoics, we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. He was banished, and soon after put to death. Then followed a wholesale expulsion from Rome of all the Stoics and Cynics; and we may infer from several allusions to them in Juvenal that the popular sentiment, which regarded them as hypocrites and impostors, heartily approved this seemingly harsh measure. The quiet man of letters, who was content to make the best of existing political arrangements, had nothing to fear from Vespasian. Such a man as the elder Pliny was perfectly safe, and, without any loss of self-respect, could look upon the Emperor as a friend. In the year A.D. 77, he dedicated his great work on natural history to Vespasian's son and successor.

Vespasian encouraged architecture as well as letters. He adorned both Rome and the provincial cities with splendid structures. The Colosseum, the greatest building of the ancient world, was begun by him. The Temple of Peace was also his work. He spared no expense in making the capital, and the empire generally, more imposing and magnificent. His reign was peaceful and prosperous; there were none of those commotions in Gaul, Germany, or the East which before and after his time almost seemed to threaten the Roman world with dissolution. As might have been expected from a prudent and energetic soldier, he maintained the armies of the state, which numbered about 400,000 men, in thorough efficiency. In A.D. 78, the great Julius Agricola, Tacitus's father-in-law, whom Vespasian had raised to the patrician rank, was sent to Britain, and strengthened the Roman hold on the island by the conquest of North Wales and Anglesey. In the following year the Emperor died, and was succeeded by his son Titus.

The chief event which we usually associate with the name of Titus is the capture of Jerusalem,* and the destruction of the Jewish nationality. His short reign of two years was perfectly tranquil. He was so popular an emperor that he was spoken of as "the delight of the human race." Though he had seen and himself taken part in peculiarly horrible scenes of war, there was much less of the stern soldier in him than in his father. He could win men's affections as well as gain their respect. He was lavish of money, and

* Jerusalem was taken in the month of September, A.D. 70.

was sincerely anxious to spread comfort and happiness among his subjects. The hateful class of informers who from the time of Tiberius had traded successfully on false accusations of treason, were driven out of Rome in disgrace. Like his father, he improved the capital with great public works. He completed and dedicated the Colosseum, and gave to Rome the famous baths which are called by his name. His reign, however, was not without serious disasters. The great eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79, a fire which raged uninterruptedly in Rome for three days, and was hardly less destructive than that in Nero's reign, and a pestilence which for a while, according to Eusebius, daily destroyed 10,000 of the population, followed in quick succession. In the eruption of Vesuvius perished a man who, both for his own merits and for the beneficial influence which he exercised over the mind of the young Pliny, deserves a detailed notice. To the elder Pliny we must certainly give the first place among the authors of his time. He did not, indeed, escape the weaknesses and defects which marred all the natural philosophy of the ancients, but he pursued his studies with an ardour and enthusiasm which could not fail to produce substantial results.

The nephew, we may be sure, owed much to such an uncle. In one of his letters,* of which we subjoin a translation, he describes, with evident admiration, his uncle's marvellous devotion to study. From this letter we derive our chief acquaintance with the elder Pliny's manner of life.

* Epist. iii. 5.

"It is a great pleasure to me," he writes to his friend, Bæbius Macer, "that you are so fond of reading my uncle's books that you wish to possess them all, and ask for a complete list of them. I will do the part of an index, and also tell you the order in which they were written, for the studious reader likes to know this." First comes a work in one volume, on the use of the dart by cavalry,—a careful and ingenious treatise, which he composed when he was in command of one of the cavalry corps of our allied troops. Two volumes of the life of Pomponius Secundus, a work which he intended as a tribute to the memory of a friend who was singularly attached to him. Wars with Germany, in twenty books; in these, he compiled a history of all our wars with the German tribes. A dream which he had when serving with the army in Germany suggested the work. Drusus Nero, whose victories in Germany were on the widest scale hitherto known, and who perished in the country, seemed to stand by him as he lay asleep, and to entreat him to rescue his memory from oblivion. The Student, in three parts, which from their length spread into six volumes: a work in which is discussed the earliest training and subsequent education of the orator. Questions of Grammar and Style, in eight books, written in the last years of Nero's reign, when every sort of literary pursuit requiring freedom and elevation of tone was dangerous in our enslaved condition. A History of the State, in continuation of the work of Aufidius Bassus, in thirty-one books. Last comes his Natural History, in thirty-seven books; a work of vast

extent, and as various as nature itself. You wonder at a busy man having completed such a number of books—books, too, containing much abstruse matter; you will wonder more when I tell you that for some time he was a pleader, that he died at the age of 56, and that meantime he was much hindered and distracted by important state business, and by his intimacy with our emperors. But his intellect was quick, his industry perfectly marvellous, his power of remaining awake remarkable. From the 23d of August he began to study at midnight, and through the winter he continued to rise at one, or at the latest at two in the morning, often at twelve. Sleep he could always command. Often it used to come upon him and leave him in the midst of his books. Before daybreak he would go to the Emperor, Vespasian, who also worked at night, and thence to his official duties. On returning home he gave what time remained to study. After taking a light meal, as our forefathers used to do, he would often in summer, if he had leisure, recline in the sun, and have a book read to him, on which he wrote notes, or from which he made extracts. He read nothing without making extracts, for he used to say that you could get some good from the worst book. After reading in the sun he generally had a cold bath, then a light meal and a very short nap, after which, as if he was beginning another day, he would study till dinner-time. During dinner a book was read to him, and he made notes upon it as it went on. I remember one of his friends once stopping the reader, who had pronounced a word incorrectly, and making him repeat it. My

uncle said to him, 'Did you not understand the word?' 'Yes,' he replied. 'Why then did you stop him? We have lost more than ten lines by this interruption.' So parsimonious was he of his time. He rose from dinner in the summer by daylight, in winter before seven, as regularly as if constrained by law. Thus he lived in the midst of his work and in the bustle of Rome. In the country, he exempted only his bathing-time from study; I mean, the actual time of his immersion in the water, for while he was being rubbed or dried, he would hear something read or would dictate something. While travelling, he threw aside every other care, and gave himself up to study; he always had a scribe at his side with a book and a writing-tablet, whose hands in winter were protected by gloves, so that the cold weather might not rob him of a single moment. Even at Rome, he used to be carried in a litter with this view. I remember his rebuking me for taking a walk. 'You might have managed,' he said, 'not to lose these hours.' In fact, he thought all time lost which was not given to study. It was by this intense application that he completed so great a number of books, and left me, besides, a hundred and sixty volumes of extracts, written on both sides of the leaf, and in the minutest hand. He used to tell me that when he was governor in Spain, he might have sold these volumes to Largius Licinus for more than £3000, and then there were fewer of them. Would you not think, when you call to mind how much he read and wrote, that he had never held office or enjoyed an emperor's favour? And again, on hear-

ing of the intensity of his application, would you not say that he had not read or written enough? It makes me smile, when people call me a student; for, compared with him, I am a mere idler. For myself, I am but a man whose attention is divided between public business and services rendered to friends. Yet of those who devote their life to letters, who would not blush at being compared with my uncle, and feel himself utterly lazy and slothful? I have written a long letter, though you wished only to know what works he left behind him; but I am sure that this account of him will be quite as acceptable to you as a list of the books themselves, and it may have the effect of urging you in a spirit of emulation not merely to read them, but even to accomplish some similar work."

The nephew, as we shall see, was a less close student than the uncle, but a man whose range of interests was wider and more diversified.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT ERUPTION OF VESUVIUS.

THE summer of A.D. 79 was made memorable by a frightful catastrophe, of which Pliny was an eye-witness, and of which he has left us a singularly valuable account, in two letters written some years afterwards to his friend the historian Tacitus. The writer was, as usual, residing at the time with his uncle and his mother near Misenum, where the elder Pliny was in command of the fleet stationed at that place—a promontory which forms the northern extremity of the Bay of Naples. The Bay, then, as now, one of the most beautiful spots in the world, was crowded with the villas of the Roman nobility. Baiæ, the Brighton of Rome, with its splendid baths and terraces built out into the sea; Puteoli, with its busy harbour; Neapolis, one of the largest and wealthiest of the Italian cities; with Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiæ,—occupied the sea-coast in an almost continuous line. Behind them, with its slopes reaching almost to the sea, rose Vesuvius, clad to its summit, which reached the height of about 4000 feet,

with olive and vine. A luxuriant vegetation concealed all traces of the volcanic nature of the mountain, and neither history nor tradition preserved any record which might warn the populous cities at its base of the danger which threatened them. Earthquakes, indeed, were not unfrequent in the country; and one of more severity than usual had, sixteen years before, seriously injured both Herculaneum and Pompeii. But of the existence of a volcano no suspicion seems to have been entertained.

* It was at one o'clock in the afternoon of the 24th of August that the elder Pliny, always an eager observer of natural phenomena, was summoned by his sister-in-law from his study to witness a strange sight—a cloud of unusual size and shape, which was visible on the opposite side of the Bay. It rose from one of the hills, which the observers did not know at the time to be Vesuvius, like a stone-pine with a lofty trunk and a cluster of branches at the top, continually varying in height, and of a changing hue, sometimes fiery-bright, sometimes streaked with black. It was the beginning of that great shower of ashes and dust which is said—a not incredible assertion, when we compare it with the records of other eruptions—to have reached as far as Africa and Egypt. The old philosopher, anxious to get a nearer view of what was happening, ordered one of the light vessels belonging to the fleet to be manned. At the same time he invited his nephew to accompany him; an offer which the young man, who was more attached to literature than to natural science,

* This account gives the substance of Epist. vi. 16.

declined, pleading in excuse a literary task which his uncle had set him. The two did not meet again. The uncle, whose fortunes our narrative will follow for the present, changed his purpose on arriving at the shore. A letter was put into his hands from Rectina, the wife of Cæsius Bassus, a poet of some eminence, who had a villa on the shore of the Bay. This lady was terrified at the danger in which she found herself—not without reason, if it be true, as we are told, that her husband actually perished in the eruption. The admiral's philosophical curiosity gave place to a more serious purpose. Others besides Rectina were imperilled, and he might give them help. The galleys of the fleet were ordered to put to sea, and to steer for the opposite side of the Bay, where the danger was obviously most imminent. How serious this danger was, became more evident as they approached the scene. Showers of cinders and fragments of heated stone fell around and upon the ships. At the same time it was found that the soundings of the Bay were altered—an effect attributed to the falling masses, but probably in a great measure owing to an elevation of the sea-bed. The elder Pliny, who had continued calmly to note down his observations, hesitated for a moment whether or no he should proceed; his sailing-master strongly advised return. His resolve was soon taken. Crying out, "Fortune helps the bold," he gave orders that the fleet should make for the little town of Stabiæ, near the extreme southern point of the Bay, where his friend, or, as some suppose, his second in command, Pomponianus, was residing. While the ships were

busy in embarking the terrified inhabitants of the coast, the admiral himself, who had landed at his friend's villa, did his best to encourage the frightened inmates, and proceeded, with what was anyhow an admirable assumption of cheerfulness, to enjoy the bath and dinner which formed the customary close of a Roman gentleman's day. Flames, which the approaching darkness had now made more visible, were seen to break forth from the summit and sides of Vesuvius, and the alarm at the villa increased. The philosopher made light of these fears, and accounted for the flames by the theory that some of the country houses in the neighbourhood, which had been deserted by their inhabitants, had caught fire. He then retired to his bedchamber; the other inmates of the house were in no humour for sleep, but as they passed his door they heard the deep snoring (the philosopher was of a corpulent habit) which indicated that his slumbers were undisturbed. Before long, however, it was found necessary to rouse him. His apartment was approached from an open court, and this was filling up so rapidly with ashes and stones that egress would soon have become impossible. He rose and joined his friends, who were in doubt what course to pursue. The house was trembling with frequent shocks of earthquake, and threatened destruction to its inmates. Out of doors there was the peril of the falling stones, which, though calcined with fire, and therefore light in proportion to their size, seemed sufficiently heavy to be dangerous.* To leave the house appeared,

* Some have been found at Pompeii, which was, however,

on the whole, the preferable alternative. With pillows and cushions fastened upon their heads by way of protection, the party sallied forth, first making their way to the sea, by which they hoped to secure their escape. They found it wild and stormy, with the wind blowing strongly on shore, and were compelled for the present to abandon the idea. The old man, fatigued with his exertions, lay down upon a rug which the attendants spread for him. Twice he asked for a draught of cold water; then, when the sudden approach of flames and sulphurous vapour dispersed the party, in attempting, with the help of two of his servants, to rise from the ground, he fell dead. The actual cause of his death cannot be determined. His nephew says that he was choked with sulphurous vapour, which acted the more readily on him as his breathing was affected by chronic weakness. But this account was collected from hearsay, and was written many years after the occurrence; while it may well be doubted, according to a writer of the first authority on such subjects,* whether flames and sulphurous vapours could have been present at Stabiæ, ten miles from the centre of the eruption. We may conjecture, as a more probable cause of death, a sudden attack of illness. This supposition agrees with what we are told was the appearance of the corpse when it was found three days afterwards,—"The attitude of the body was more like that of a sleeper than that of a dead man."

considerably nearer to Vesuvius, weighing as much as eight pounds. At Stabiæ, none have been found exceeding an ounce in weight.

* Professor Phillips: 'Vesuvius,' p. 20.

We must now return to the younger Pliny and his mother. The narrative which he gives us of his own adventures* is so characteristic of the man, and at times so graphic in its descriptions, that we cannot do better than present it to our readers in a form as closely resembling the original as possible.

"When my uncle had started, I spent such time as was left on my studies—it was on their account, indeed, that I had stopped behind. Then followed the bath, dinner, and sleep,—this last disturbed and brief. There had been noticed for many days before a trembling of the earth, which had caused, however, but little fear, because it is not unusual in Campania. But that night it was so violent, that one thought that everything was being not merely moved but absolutely overturned. My mother rushed into my chamber; I was in the act of rising, with the same intention of awaking her should she have been asleep. We sat down in the open court of the house, which occupied a small space between the buildings and the sea. And now—I do not know whether to call it courage or folly, for I was but in my eighteenth year—I called for a volume of Livy, read it, as if I were perfectly at leisure, and even continued to make some extracts which I had begun. Just then arrived a friend of my uncle, who had lately come to him from Spain;† when he saw that we were sitting down—that I was even reading—he rebuked my mother for her patience, and me for my blindness to the danger. Still I bent my-

* Epist. vii. 20.

† The elder Pliny had been Procurator in Spain.

self as industriously as ever over my book. It was now seven o'clock in the morning, but the daylight was still faint and doubtful. The surrounding buildings were now so shattered, that in the place where we were, which though open was small, the danger that they might fall on us was imminent and unmistakable. So we at last determined to quit the town. A panic-stricken crowd followed us. They preferred the ideas of others to their own—in a moment of terror this has a certain look of prudence—and they pressed on us and drove us on, as we departed, by their dense array. When we had got away from the building, we stopped. There we had to endure the sight of many marvellous, many dreadful things. The carriages which we had directed to be brought out moved about in opposite directions, though the ground was perfectly level; even when scotched with stones they did not remain steady in the same place. Besides this, we saw the sea retire into itself, seeming, as it were, to be driven back by the trembling movement of the earth. The shore had distinctly advanced, and many marine animals were left high and dry upon the sands. Behind us was a dark and dreadful cloud, which, as it was broken with rapid zigzag flashes, revealed behind it variously-shaped masses of flame: these last were like sheet-lightning, though on a larger scale. Then our friend from Spain addressed us more energetically and urgently than ever. 'If your brother,' he said, 'if your uncle is alive, he wishes you to be saved; if he has perished, he certainly wished you to survive him. If so, why do you hesitate to escape?' We

answered that we could not bear to think about our own safety while we were doubtful of his. He lingered no longer, but rushed off, making his way out of the danger at the top of his speed. It was not long before the cloud that we saw began to descend upon the earth and cover the sea. It had already surrounded and concealed the island of Capreæ, and had made invisible the promontory of Misenum. My mother besought, urged, even commanded me to fly as best I could; 'I might do so,' she said, 'for I was young; she, from age and corpulence, could move but slowly, but would be content to die, if she did not bring death upon me.' I replied that I would not seek safety except in her company; I clasped her hand, and compelled her to go with me. She reluctantly obeyed, but continually reproached herself for delaying me. Ashes now began to fall—still, however, in small quantities. I looked behind me; a dense dark mist seemed to be following us, spreading itself over the country like a cloud. 'Let us turn out of the way,' I said, 'whilst we can still see, for fear that should we fall in the road we should be trodden under foot in the darkness by the throngs that accompany us.' We had scarcely sat down when night was upon us,—not such as we have when there is no moon, or when the sky is cloudy, but such as there is in some closed room when the lights are extinguished. You might hear the shrieks of women, the monotonous wailing of children, the shouts of men. Many were raising their voices, and seeking to recognise by the voices that replied, parents, children, husbands, or wives. Some

were loudly lamenting their own fate, others the fate of those dear to them. Some even prayed for death, in their fear of what they prayed for. Many lifted their hands in prayer to the gods; more were convinced that there were now no gods at all, and that the final endless night of which we have heard had come upon the world.* There were not wanting persons who exaggerated our real perils with terrors imaginary or wilfully invented. I remember some who declared that one part of the promontory Misenum had fallen, that another was on fire; it was false, but they found people to believe them. It now grew somewhat light again; we felt sure that this was not the light of day, but a proof that fire was approaching us. Fire there was, but it stopped at a considerable distance from us; then came darkness again, and a thick heavy fall of ashes. Again and again we stood up and shook them off; otherwise we should have been covered by them, and even crushed by the weight. I might boast that not a sigh, not a word wanting in courage, escaped me, even in the midst of peril so great, had I not been convinced that I was perishing in company with the universe, and the universe with me—a miserable and yet a mighty solace in death. At last the black mist I had spoken of seemed to shade off into smoke or cloud, and to roll away. Then came genuine daylight, and the sun shone out with a lurid light, such as it is wont to have in an eclipse. Our eyes, which had not yet re-

* This final annihilation of the universe, in which the gods themselves would be included, was an idea common to the classical and Scandinavian mythologies.

covered from the effects of fear, saw everything changed, everything covered deep with ashes as if with snow. We returned to Misenum, and, after refreshing ourselves as best we could, spent a night of anxiety in mingled hope and fear. Fear, however, was still the stronger feeling; for the trembling of the earth continued, while many frenzied persons, with their terrific predictions, gave an exaggeration that was even ludicrous to the calamities of themselves and of their friends. Even then, in spite of all the perils which we had experienced and which we still expected, we had not a thought of going away till we could hear news of my uncle."

This account, though sufficiently vivid in its description of the feelings and demeanour of the writer and his companions, is scarcely satisfactory as a narrative of facts. The writer does not tell us in what direction the fugitives proceeded, though we may gather, from what he says about the island of Capreæ having become invisible, that they advanced along the shore of the Bay, and therefore towards the immediate neighbourhood of the eruption. Capreæ (*Capri*) would have been naturally hidden by the high land of the promontory from persons travelling in a northerly direction. Again, he says nothing about the time covered by his narrative. But as he would probably have mentioned the circumstance, had he passed a night in the open air, we may suppose that he returned to the villa at Misenum on the afternoon of the same day on which he had quitted it, this day being the 25th of August. The promontory is about twenty miles distant from Vesuvius, and the strong north wind which

was blowing during the day would have helped to clear the atmosphere. At Stabiæ, on the opposite side of the Bay, and much nearer to the mountain, the effects of the eruption lasted longer. The body of the elder Pliny was found, we are told, "on the morning of the third day from that which he had last seen." This day "which he had last seen" must have been the 24th,* that on which he quitted his house; for though he was alive on the morning of the next, we are told that everything was wrapt in darkness. If we follow the inclusive reckoning by which the Romans, with other nations of antiquity, commonly counted their days, we infer that it was found possible to revisit Stabiæ, and to search for the corpse, on the morning of the 26th.† It is natural to suppose that when the first violence of the eruption had been spent, the lighter showers of ashes might continue to fall on the southern side of the Bay. That much, however, could not have fallen, may be inferred from what is said about the finding of the body.

A more remarkable omission, as at first sight it appears to be, is the absence of any allusion to the fearful event which the mention of the first eruption at once suggests to us—the destruction of the cities of Hercu-

* Epist. vi. 16, 20.

† The most obvious illustration of this reckoning is to be found in the narrative of the resurrection of our Lord. According to the accounts of the evangelists, He was buried in the evening of Friday, and left the grave before dawn on Sunday, being said "to rise again on the third day," and even—a much stronger expression—to have "been three days and three nights in the earth."

laneum and Pompeii. They were both, it is true, places of third-rate importance—a fact which we are apt to lose sight of in the singular interest which they possess for us. Nevertheless the catastrophe would have been certainly noticed by our author if it had been his business, at the time of writing, to do so. But both of the letters, of which we have been making use in this chapter, were written in compliance with definite requests on the part of his correspondent. Tacitus, who was then collecting materials for his History, a work which was to include the period from the accession of Galba to the death of Domitian, first asked his friend for an account of the last hours of his uncle. A casual phrase in the letter which this request called forth, suggested to the historian that his friend's personal experiences would be of interest and value. With these, accordingly, a second letter supplied him. The particulars of the most important incident in the eruption—the destruction of the cities—he obtained elsewhere. In the prefatory chapters of the History, he mentions, among the events which he will have to record, "disasters," as he expresses it, "either entirely novel or that recurred only after a long succession of ages," that "cities in the richest plains of Campania were swallowed up and overwhelmed." Unhappily this portion of the work has been lost. The consequence is, that we are left without any contemporary account of the calamity. An epigram of Martial, written about twelve years after the event, and the words which have been quoted from Tacitus, are the only allusions that we find till we come to Dion

Cassius, a Greek rhetorician of the third century. He tells us, amidst other particulars, real or fabulous, that the matter sent forth from Vesuvius buried two cities, Herculaneum and Pompeii, while the population was sitting in the theatre. Modern research informs us that Herculaneum was overwhelmed by a torrent of liquid mud, which issued from the volcano,* and that Pompeii was buried under showers of ashes and stones. The destruction of Stabiæ was not so complete, and it appears to have been soon occupied again.

* According to Professor Phillips, there is no evidence to prove that any lava-streams descended from the mountain in the eruption of A.D. 79.

CHAPTER III.

REIGN OF TERROR—DOMITIAN'S LAST DAYS—BANISHMENT OF THE PHILOSOPHERS.

DOMITIAN succeeded his brother Titus in A.D. 81. His reign of fifteen years is one of considerable interest, and it is most unfortunate that the portion of the History of Tacitus which described it is lost to us. Its early years were not without glory for the empire. Agricola's campaigns in Britain ended in the complete subjugation of the country to the Roman sway. The formidable German tribes were at least cowed by an expedition undertaken by the Emperor in person; and though men secretly laughed at his assumption of the surname Germanicus, it appears on the whole probable that the northern frontiers of the empire were effectually strengthened. A perilous war, accompanied by some terrible reverses to the Roman arms, was also waged (A.D. 86-90) with the Dacians, a Thracian tribe on the Lower Danube, whose settlements almost coincided with Transylvania, and parts of Moldavia and Wallachia. Rome, from the time of Augustus, had found them troublesome and dangerous neighbours. On this occa-

sion a Roman legion and its commander were destroyed by them. In A.D. 90 they were pressed hard by an able Roman general, and peace was at length concluded, without, however, any extension of the frontier, and on terms which were by no means honourable to Rome. Trajan subsequently, after two successful campaigns, annexed the country to the empire. Pliny, as we shall see, speaks of this second Dacian war in one of his letters as full of picturesque incidents. He is writing to one of his literary friends, who intended to describe it in an epic poem.

There is, perhaps, hardly a more hateful name in history than that of Domitian. Yet the first part of his reign was not without promise. During this period Pliny was assiduously practising at the bar, and rising into fame as an advocate. He lived in the best literary society of Rome. After the conclusion of the Dacian war in A.D. 90, the Emperor began to show in his government the worst side of his character. He had been a bad son and a bad brother; he seemed now bent on making himself the most detestable of rulers. There can be no doubt that there was a taint of actual madness about both Caligula and Nero, which must be taken into account in passing judgment on them. Domitian was a man of considerable ability and culture, and of perfectly sane mind, and in all his cruelty and wickedness there was an intelligible purpose. With the year A.D. 93, when Pliny would be in his 32d year, a reign of terror began, which lasted to A.D. 96, the date of Domitian's death. These three years were perhaps the most dreadful period in Roman

history. In A.D. 93 the great Agricola died, and it was the popular belief that he had been poisoned by the Emperor. At any rate his death was the beginning of a series of the most horrible judicial murders. In the opening of his History, Tacitus speaks of these years as a period in which "even peace was full of horrors." "The sea," he says, "was crowded with exiles, and its rocks were polluted with bloody deeds. In the capital were yet more dreadful cruelties. Nobility, wealth, the refusal or the acceptance of office, were grounds of accusation, and virtue insured destruction. The rewards of the informers were no less odious than their crimes; for while some seized on consulships and priestly offices as their share of the spoil, others on procuratorships and posts of more confidential authority, they robbed and plundered in every direction amid universal hatred and terror. Slaves were bribed to turn against their masters, and freedmen to betray their patrons; and those who had no personal enemy were destroyed by friends." In his Life of Agricola, he contrasts Nero with Domitian, to the advantage of the former. "Nero," he says, "ordered cruelties to be committed, but did not himself witness them. Under Domitian, what crowned our misery was to see the tyrant, and to be seen by him, and to have our very sighs noted down against us as evidences of guilt." In that terrible year, A.D. 93, Pliny was prætor, an office which involved a seat in the senate. "I was," he says, in his panegyric of Trajan, "promoted to office by Domitian before he openly professed a hatred of all good men; when he had done so, I sought no further

advancement." Senators were proscribed, and, as we have seen had been done before by Vespasian, the philosophers were banished from Rome, "in order that," as Tacitus says, in his introduction to the Life of Agricola, "nothing noble and virtuous might anywhere confront men's view." Pliny had many friends among the philosophers, and their society was altogether to his taste. He tells us in one of his letters, that at the time when the edict was issued which drove them into exile, he was himself staying in the house of one of their number, close to Rome. This intimacy with members of a proscribed class seems to have been an occasion of danger to him during this dreadful time. "I was," he says, in the letter above referred to, "so to speak, scorched by the thunderbolts which fell around me, and which struck down so many of my friends; and I augured from certain indications the same ruin for myself." He explains his meaning in another letter. "I should," he says, "have been the victim of an impeachment, had Domitian lived longer. In his portfolio was found a paper containing an information against me by Carus." Carus Metius was one of the class technically known as "delatores." Of these we shall hear more presently. The "delator" was a man who lived, and often rose to wealth and fame, as an informer and false accuser. As we should suppose, his trade was one likely to be fostered and encouraged by imperialism, and was sure to flourish under a bad emperor. He had prospered under Nero. He became yet more prosperous and formidable under Domitian, and was often a man of intellectual power, and had

access to even the best society. Without such a weapon the emperor's jealousy and malice would have been almost powerless to do harm. Domitian used it more systematically and mercilessly than any of his predecessors. The result is described by Tacitus in one of the opening chapters of his Life of Agricola. "As a former age," he says, "witnessed the extreme of freedom, so has ours witnessed the extreme of slavery, for we were robbed of the very privilege of interchanging our thoughts. We should have lost memory as well as speech, had it been as possible for us to forget as it was to keep silence." *

The reign of terror ended in A.D. 96. As Juvenal tells us, the tyrant who was red with the blood of the noblest families of Rome fell by the assassin's hand when he became an object of dread to the artisan. A promising future now opened on Pliny.

* Agricola, c. 45.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW AGE—VENGEANCE ON THE INFORMERS—THE GREAT PROVINCIAL TRIALS.

THOUGH Pliny, as we have seen, had, like his illustrious friend Tacitus, continued to take some part in public life even during the last and worst part of the reign of terror, he must have felt profoundly the relief when the sword of Stephanus rid the civilised world of the most dangerous tyrant it had ever known. He had been on an intimate footing with some of the most illustrious of Domitian's victims, and his own name, as we have seen, would probably have been added to the list. The strongest motives, therefore, combined to induce him to share in the movement, which was naturally the first impulse of the liberated states, to exact from the informers, who had been the most odious and deadly instruments of the fallen despot, the just penalty for their crimes. One of the earliest acts of the new reign had been formally to suppress the whole class, though the gentleness, or perhaps it should rather be said, the weakness, of Nerva, induced him to shield from punishment some of the

worst offenders. The first few days of recovered liberty were spent in hunting down inferior criminals whom no one cared to defend. Pliny took no part in these hasty proceedings, but reserved himself for a greater effort. One of the most atrocious acts of Domitian's reign had been the judicial murder of Priscus Helvidius, with whom, as with many members of his family, Pliny had been on terms of intimate friendship. It was indeed a family of martyrs to liberty, whose story well deserves to be told. No matron in the best days of Rome had been more illustrious for resolute courage than the first Arria. Pliny tells a pathetic story of the fortitude with which she bore and concealed from her husband, whose precarious health demanded the effort, the death of her son, a boy of singular beauty and promise—how she brought into the sick-chamber a face of unfailing cheerfulness, and left, as he forcibly puts it, her bereavement outside the doors. This husband, Cæcina Pætus by name, afterwards took part in an unsuccessful insurrection in Illyricum against the Emperor Claudius, and was taken a prisoner to Rome. Arria, forbidden to embark in the ship which carried him, followed in a fishing-boat across a stormy and perilous sea. When he was brought before Claudius, and found an adverse witness in the wife of Scribonianus, the leader of the movement, she broke forth in the scornful reproach, "Shall I listen to you, you in whose lap Scribonianus was killed, and who still endure to live?" Pætus, knowing that escape was hopeless, resolved to anticipate his fate by suicide. In this noble resolution (for

such it seemed to a Roman moralist) his wife sustained him, taking the dagger in her hands, and teaching him fortitude by stabbing herself, while she uttered the words which the epigram of Martial has made immortal, "PÆTE NON DOLET." * The constancy with which, after her husband's death, she resolved to put an end to her own life, seemed equally worthy of praise: "I will find," she cried to the relatives who sought to restrain her, "some road to death, however painful, if you thwart me in that which is easy." The tradition of this courage was well preserved in the next generation by the second Arria, daughter of the first, and by her husband Pætus Thrasea, one of the most distinguished of the few men who ventured to keep something of the old Roman freedom under the tyranny of Nero. When that bad prince, after the murder of his mother Agrippina, wrote a letter to the senate, informing it that the deceased had conspired against him and had been justly punished, Pætus, unable to bear the shame of condoning such a crime, rose from his place, and left the house. In the next year he contrived to baffle the vengeance of the tyrant upon one whom he accused of having libelled him; and he gave the final offence by refusing to concur in the divine honours which were paid to Poppæa, the Emperor's wife. The story of his last hours is told in one of the most masterly passages, unhappily imperfect in the existing copies, of the 'Annals' of Tacitus. His wife, Arria, who had wished to follow the example of her mother, was persuaded, for the

* "Pætus, it does not hurt."

sake of her daughter, to remain alive. This daughter, Fannia by name, Thrasea had given to a man in whom he had found a spirit singularly akin to his own, Priscus Helvidius. The younger man shared to the full his father-in-law's dangerous passion for liberty, and was his companion at the feasts, at which he quaffed, as Juvenal tells us, chaplet on head, his oldest wine to the memories of great republican heroes—the Brutus who had driven out the kings, his namesake who had stabbed the dictator Cæsar, and Cassius. When Thrasea was dead, Nero seems to have been satisfied with the banishment of Helvidius. From this exile he returned when, with the accession of Galba, a better day seemed to dawn. His first act was to attack the accuser of his father-in-law, Eprius Marcellus—an attack which he repeated when Vespasian came to the throne. He made enemies right and left among the powerful class to which Marcellus belonged; and his demeanour to the Emperor was so bold, we may almost say so reckless, that these enemies were not long in bringing about his ruin. He was banished to one of the provincial towns of Italy, and an order for his death—which was, however, recalled when it was too late—soon followed him. Fannia, who had accompanied him in his first and in his second exile, returned to the capital, probably after the death of Vespasian. In the evil days of Domitian she was accused of having incited Senecio to write a panegyric on her husband, and was banished for the third time. By a former wife, whose name we do not know, Helvidius had a son who bore the same name,

and who was among Pliny's most intimate friends. He was a man of great ability, and he cherished the principles which were dear to his father, but, warned by his fate, he sought safety in avoiding public life. The precaution was of no avail. The informers found in a drama which had for its subject the loves of Paris and Œnone an attack on the private life of Domitian. No more atrocious crime was committed even in these terrible days. Not only was the man absolutely blameless, but the circumstances that attended his death were peculiarly revolting. A scene of violence to which Tacitus, who must have been present on the occasion, alludes, not without shame, disgraced the senate-house. Helvidius was actually dragged off to prison by some of the senators, among whom one Publicius Certus was conspicuous.

It was on Certus that Pliny resolved to avenge the death of his friend, and, we may say, the wrongs of a whole family. He was bowed down at the time by a severe domestic affliction, having lost his wife so recently, that etiquette did not permit him to leave the house. He sent, however, for Anteia, the widow of Helvidius, and bade her communicate his purpose to the two distinguished ladies, Arria and Fannia, who, next to the widow, were the nearest relatives of the murdered man. They had just returned from exile, and they immediately signified their approval. At the next meeting of the senate, Pliny commenced the attack. His first sentences were heard with applause, but as his purpose unfolded itself, a vigorous opposition sprang up. Why was he raking up these old troubles?

Whom was he accusing in this irregular fashion? Even his friends sought to change his purpose, using especially the ominous threat that he was making himself a marked man, whom future emperors would be sure to distrust; and pointing to the powerful friends on whom Certus relied—to one especially who was then commanding a large army in the East, and who might, it was thought, be not indisposed to play the part of another Vespasian. When the opinion of the House was called for, senator after senator, some of them friends and connections of Pliny, expressed disapproval of the proceeding. But two speakers supported him. Avidius Quietus, who had been a close friend of Thrasea, declared that the senate could not refuse to hear the complaints of Arria and Fannia, and must regard not the position but the conduct of the accused. Cornutus Tertullus told the assembly that he had been appointed guardian of the daughters of Helvidius, and pointed out to it how moderate was the request of the complainants, demanding as they did nothing more than a public censure on the guilty man. Pliny, when it came to his turn to reply, carried the senate with him. Veiento, who indeed was deeply implicated in the guilt of the informers, attempted to defend his friend, but could barely make himself heard. The presiding consul called for a division while he was still attempting to speak, and he turned away muttering a line from Homer—

"Old man, those younger warriors press thee sore."

It is true that the Emperor, when the resolution of the

senate was sent up to him, took no action upon it. The champion of Certus was among his intimate friends, and while Veiento was in favour, Certus could scarcely be punished. It is satisfactory to know that there was not wanting a Roman of the old type to tell the truth even to an emperor. * "I wonder," said Nerva to his guests at the dinner-table, when the conversation happened to turn on one of the informers, Catullus Messalinus—"I wonder what would have happened to him were he alive now." Catullus, who was blind, had distinguished himself even in these days by a cruelty peculiarly revolting and pitiless. "He would be dining with us," said Junius Mauricus, one of the guests, with a reference which could not be mistaken to Veiento, who was reclining on the same couch with the Emperor. Certus, however, did not escape with entire impunity. The consulship, to which he had been named, was bestowed upon another man; and he was superseded in his own office of Prefect of the Treasury. Nor did he long survive his disgrace. Pliny published a report of all the speeches delivered upon the occasion. Very soon after the appearance of the book Certus died. Pliny was told—and he hoped, for the sake of justice, that the report was true—that the guilty man fancied that he saw the image of his accuser, sword in hand, perpetually threatening him.

Arria seems to have died not long after her return from exile, and a letter * of Pliny's leaves it in doubt whether her daughter Fannia did not soon follow her. At least he mentions her severe and dangerous illness,

* Epist. vii. 19.

and deplores by anticipation the loss which it seemed too likely the country was about to suffer. It is pleasing to learn incidentally from this, the last notice that we have of her, that her high courage was not inconsistent with a very tender and womanly nature. Her illness was the result of the ceaseless care with which she had watched by the sick-bed of a kinswoman of her husband, one of the Vestal Virgins. The Virgins, when attacked by illness, were sent away from the temple, and committed to the care of some matron of high character. Fannia had at first voluntarily undertaken, and afterwards been regularly intrusted by the Pontiff with, the care of her relative. "What purity is in thee," cries Pliny, "what holiness, what dignity, what courage! And, at the same time, how pleasing she is, and how courteous! one who can be loved—a rare excellence this—as kind as she is respected. . . . I reverenced, I loved both mother and daughter; I know not which I put first; they had no thought of any difference. They had my services in prosperity,—they had them in adversity. I was able to console them in their exile, and I sought them when they came back. Still I never made them an equal return; therefore I am the more desirous that the one still left may be preserved to me, to give some more opportunity of fulfilling my obligations. This is my anxiety, as I write. If only some god will turn it into joy, I shall not complain at having felt these fears." With these wishes, of which we would gladly know the issue, Fannia vanishes from our sight. It completes the history of an unfortunate family when we learn

that the two daughters of Helvidius died in childbed.

The early years of Trajan were signalised by the punishment which overtook another class of offenders, the rapacious governors of the provinces. One of the most notorious of these was Marius Priscus,* to whose name Juvenal has given an evil immortality in one of his most pregnant lines, in which he ironically warns his friend that he must not expect much plunder when the provinces had already been squeezed to the utmost, "when Marius has just stripped his slender Africans to the skin." The Africa which Priscus had robbed was a fertile province, including the northern shore of the continent for a length of about 300 miles, now known as Tunis and part of Algiers, and important to the capital as supplying it with a great part of the wheat, which Italy could no longer produce. But Marius had been something more than an ordinary robber. He had received bribes—so at least his accusers alleged—for bringing about the condemnation and death of innocent men. One Vitellius Honoratus had bought from him, for a sum of £2500 in our money, the banishment of a Roman knight and the execution of seven of his associates. Another man, Flavius Martianus by name, had paid £6000 for a similar equivalent. Here again the victim was a Roman knight. He had been beaten with clubs, then condemned to the mine, and finally strangled in prison. Marius, anxious to avoid exposure, did not attempt to defend himself against the charges of rapacity and extortion,

* See Epist. ii. 11, 12.

but, so far confessing his guilt, begged the senate to appoint arbitrators who should estimate the amount to be refunded. The province had employed as its counsel the two friends, Pliny and Tacitus. They opposed the request. The crimes of the accused had, they said, been too atrocious to admit of such a settlement. The senate decided that the arbitrators should be appointed, but that the accusers should have liberty to substantiate, if they could, the other charge. The accomplices of Priscus were summoned to attend. Honoratus died before he could be brought before the senate, but Martianus was produced. After one adjournment, made for the purpose of bringing the two accused together, the cause was heard. It was the time—the month of January—when the capital was especially crowded, and the senators attended in unusual numbers. The Emperor himself presided in his capacity of consul. Pliny, though he had had much experience as an advocate, felt nervous and anxious. Priscus had been consul, and had belonged to one of the sacred colleges; he had been already found guilty of extortion, and it might seem to be pressing hard on a fallen man to bring against him further charges. The speech, however, was a great success. It lasted for nearly five hours. The Emperor showed his personal interest in the orator by more than once suggesting to the freedman who stood behind him, that he should warn his master against an over-exertion to which his somewhat feeble frame was not equal. Pliny was followed by other advocates on both sides, and the senate was twice adjourned. A great part of the third day was

occupied by reading over the evidence. Then came the voting. Two propositions had been made. One was, that Marius should pay into the treasury the money received from Martianus, and should be banished from Rome and Italy, while the exile of Martianus was to extend also to Africa. The other was identical as far as the money was concerned, but limited the banishment of Martianus to five years, and proposed to subject the principal offender to no further penalties than he had incurred under the charge of extortion. The severer sentence was ultimately adopted. It seems to us monstrously inadequate to the offence of the guilty man; but such was the character of the Roman law, so stern against the slave and the foreigner, so strangely mild in its dealings with citizens, even when it had to avenge a citizen's wrongs. Marius certainly suffered little from his sentence. He found some pleasant retreat out of Italy, where, as Juvenal tells us, exile though he was, he lived at ease* and "basked in the wrath of heaven." Pliny, however, seemed perfectly satisfied with the result of the trial, though he complains of the action of the senate in one which grew out of it, when the deputy of Marius had to answer for his share in his principal's crimes. This man, Hostilius Firminus by name, had managed the disgraceful affair of Martianus, receiving a private bribe of about £80—"perfume money" it had been called; not an inappropriate name, says Pliny, for a

* Literally, "he drank from two o'clock." To dine *early* was the mark of wealth and luxury, as no business was transacted after dinner.—Juv. Sat. i. 49.

notorious fop. A proposition that he should be degraded from the senate was rejected for the milder alternative of passing over his name in allotting the provincial governments. "What can be more absurd," asks Pliny, "than that one whom the senate has censured should still sit in the senate? should have been excluded from the proconsulship for bad behaviour while he was deputy, and yet sit in judgment on proconsuls? should have been found guilty of peculation, and yet have to condemn or acquit other men? Such was the pleasure of the majority. Opinions, you know, are numbered, not weighed: so it must always be in a public assembly, where there is nothing so unequal as equality." The sensible Roman saw clearly through the specious fallacy of "universal suffrage."

It would be tedious to relate at length the course of another trial, or rather series of trials, of a similar kind, in which Pliny was engaged about this time. During the year in which Africa had been suffering under the exactions of Priscus, Bætica, one of the divisions of Further Spain, had found a worse tyrant in Cæcilius Classicus.* Curiously enough, Priscus was a native of Spain, Classicus of Africa; and the unlucky Spaniards consoled themselves by a melancholy jest upon the coincidence, "we have got as good as we gave." Classicus was an open and notorious offender. He had had the impudence regularly to enter in his books how much every disgraceful affair had brought him in. This interesting volume had been seized, as also had been a letter to his mistress at Rome. "Hurrah!" it

* Epist. iii. 9.

said, "Hurrah! I am coming to you a free man; I have sold up half these fellows in the province, and have cleared two-and-thirty thousand pounds." Classicus, however, was beyond the reach of justice. He was dead—it was more than suspected by his own hand. But other criminals were left, and the province determined to press the charge against them. They were tried, not before the senate, but before juries appointed by that body, and in batches. The prosecution, for which Pliny appeared, had no difficulty in proving agency—the facts themselves were notorious. The defence was, that the agency had been under compulsion. Pliny was successful; and though the immediate relatives of Classicus—his wife, daughter, and son-in-law had been included in the indictment—were acquitted, many of his accomplices were condemned, and visited with punishment,—utterly inadequate, as it seems to us, but yet considered at the time sufficiently severe. An incident of the trial deserves mention, for its bearing on the subject of the earlier part of the chapter. One of the witnesses turned upon Norbanus Licinianus, an official whom the province had employed to assist in the case against his late superior, and accused him of what we should call "compounding a felony," by entering into a corrupt understanding with the wife of Classicus. The wrath of the senate blazed up in a moment. The man had plied the trade of an informer in the days of Domitian. Old charges, not relevant, as far as can be seen, to the matter in hand, were brought against him—among them, one that he had corrupted one of the jurymen on a former trial. Licini-

anus was visited with a severer sentence than any that we hear of elsewhere. He was banished to an island. There must have been some solid stuff in the man, if, as Pliny tells us without knowing whether to call such conduct courage or impudence, he continued to perform his part in the great cause of which his own trial had been an interlude, without flinching, to the end.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROMAN BAR—PLINY'S PRACTICE IN THE COURT OF THE HUNDRED—REGULUS.

PLINY, as we have said, gained early distinction by practice as an advocate. The bar had long been an honourable profession at Rome, and the way to wealth and high office. In theory, the Roman counsel gave his services gratuitously; his remuneration consisted in presents from his clients, which, however, in process of time, came to be commuted into regular fees. A law was passed in 204 B.C., forbidding such fees to be received, and it was confirmed during the reign of Augustus by a decree of the senate. Under the reigns of his successors it seems to have been systematically evaded, and occasional attempts to revive it proved failures. The law, in fact, must have become a dead letter; and all that was done to check the supposed evils of hired advocacy was to limit the amount which a counsel might receive. This, as we have it from Tacitus and from Pliny, was fixed at about £80, and it was understood to be illegal for an advocate to receive this fee till he had actually rendered his services. It seems, however, hardly likely that such

a regulation could have been strictly enforced. The lawyers, we may be sure, were too useful and influential a class to be tied down by any such artificial arrangement. Tacitus mentions an instance of a fee of something like £3500 having been once paid by a Roman knight. Senators of moderate fortune had always been in the habit of increasing their means by practice at the bar; and though, from time to time, they might grossly abuse their opportunities by shameless rapacity, it was on the whole felt to be expedient to put as little legal restraint on them as possible. Pliny very clearly implies in one of his letters that it must be left to public opinion to adjust the relations between advocates and their clients.

It was, as we have seen, at the end of Vespasian's reign that Pliny entered on the profession of the bar, and it would seem that he continued it during the reigns of Titus and Domitian. He was well off, but by no means so rich as many men of his time; and he, no doubt, found in the pursuit of the law the surest road to wealth and official rank. The court in which he began to practise, and with which indeed he seems chiefly to have been connected, was distinguished as the Court of the Hundred. Its precise functions are not clearly known to us; it is, however, certain that it had to decide a great number of important civil matters, and that various questions concerning ownership and the devolution of property were brought before it. Pliny frequently alludes to it, and in the following letter describes some peculiar and amusing practices to which young aspirants to legal fame were

not ashamed to stoop. The letter is addressed to his friend Maximus :* —

"Your conjecture is correct; I am at present quite overworked with cases in the Hundred Court, which give me more occupation than pleasure. Most of them are paltry and insignificant, for we seldom get a case in which a distinguished person or an important matter is involved. Besides, only a few of the counsel are men with whom it is any satisfaction to hold a brief; the rest are an impudent set, and many of them are unknown young men, who come into the court to make a speech by way of practice; and they do it with so little respect for their profession, and so recklessly, that I think my friend Atilius has very correctly said, that boys make a beginning at the bar with cases in the Hundred Court, just as they begin their school studies with Homer. At the bar, as at school, the most important study is the first entered on. Before my time, so my seniors tell me, even the noblest youths could find no place in court unless they were introduced by a man of consular rank; so great was the respect with which the most honourable of all professions was regarded. Now all the barriers of modesty and reverence are broken down, and instead of being introduced, they thrust themselves into the court. They have an audience like themselves, regularly hired for the occasion; a speculator contracts to supply them; presents are passed to them quite openly in the court, and they go for the same hire from court to court. Yesterday two young slaves of mine

* Epist. ii. 14.

were dragged off to applaud somebody, at half-a-crown apiece. Such is the price of the highest eloquence. For this you may fill a number of benches, collect a crowd, and have a burst of cheering as soon as ever the leader of the chorus has given his signal. Those who don't understand, and who are not even listening, must have a signal given them. Most of them pay no attention, and these very persons cheer the most loudly. If you ever have occasion to go through the colonnade in which the court is held, and wish to know how the different speakers acquit themselves, you need not go on to the raised platform where the judges sit—you need not listen to the speeches; it is easy enough to give a right guess, for you may be sure that the man who is most loudly cheered is the worst speaker. Largius Licinus was the first to introduce this fashion, but he only went round to people, and begged them to come to the court and hear the speeches. This, at any rate, is what I remember to have been told by my tutor, Quintilian. 'I used,' he said, 'to attend on the famous pleader Domitius Afer, and to go with him into court. Once, when he was speaking in his usual slow and impressive manner before the Hundred, he heard close to him a great and strange noise. He paused in astonishment. As soon as it ceased, he resumed the thread of his argument, when the noise was repeated. He again paused, and, when silence was restored, for the third time continued his speech. At last he asked, who was speaking? The reply was, Licinus. Upon this he broke off the case, and addressing the judges, said, "My profession, gentlemen, is at an end."'

Indeed, for many other reasons, the profession of the bar was on its way to ruin at the time when Afer thought it was wholly ruined. Now, it is certain that it is all over with it. I am ashamed to tell you of the mincing and affected pronunciation of the speakers, and of the shrill-voiced applause with which their speeches are received. All that is wanted to complete the performance is the clapping of hands, and the noise of drums and cymbals; even the wildest shouting (for there is no other phrase to describe a style of cheering which would be unseemly in a theatre) is a frequent accompaniment. For myself, a regard for the benefit of my friends, and my comparative youth, still keep me to my professional work; for I am afraid that people would think that I had given up a laborious occupation rather than simply avoided such disgraceful scenes. However, I go into court less frequently than was my wont, and this is a beginning of gradual retirement from practice."

Pliny's practice in this court had brought him into contact with one of the worst and most notorious specimens of the informer class. This was Regulus, who is the subject of frequent allusions in these letters. He had laid the foundations of a successful career in Nero's reign, and had continued to struggle out of obscure poverty into immense wealth and high social position. Under Vespasian and Titus he must have been obliged to content himself with simply living on his ill-gotten gains; but the last years of Domitian raised him to the very highest pinnacle of prosperity. He became a prince among millionaires, and a terror

to all good men. It is painful to find such a man the object of the grossest flatteries from the poet Martial, and it shows how a man of real genius could become morally debased under the sinister influences of that bad time. To the infamous trade of a false accuser Regulus added the practice of the arts of the fortune-hunter, which he plied with the most shameless assiduity. Pliny's stories about him illustrate a curious phase of Roman life. The following letters (of which we give the substance) show us the manner of man that he was, and may be supposed to indicate the general character of his class.

PLINY TO VOCONIUS ROMANUS.*

"Did you ever see a man more cowed, more down in the mouth, than Regulus since Domitian's death? His crimes under Domitian were quite as bad as those under Nero, but they were less easy of detection. He began to fear I was angry with him, and so indeed I was. He had done his best to imperil Rusticus Arulenus; he openly rejoiced at his death, and even published a book in which he abused him, and called him 'an ape of Stoic philosophers.' He made such a savage attack on Herennius Senecio that Metius Carus said to him, 'What have you to do with my victims? Did I ever attack Crassus or Camerinus?' These were men whom Regulus had accused and ruined in Nero's reign. He thought I was indignant at all this; and so, when he gave a reading to a select circle out of the book he had published, he did not invite me.

* Epist. i. 5.

He remembered, too, what a savage attack he had once made on me in the Court of the Hundred. I was counsel for Arrionilla, a case which I had undertaken at the request of Arulenus. I had Regulus against me. In one part of the case I laid much stress on an opinion given by Modestus, an excellent man, who was then by Domitian's order in banishment. Up jumps Regulus, and says to me, 'Pray, what view do you take of the character of Modestus?' It would, you see, have been very dangerous to me to have replied, 'I think well of him;' it would have been an infamous thing to have said the contrary. Well, I really believe that Providence helped me out of the scrape. 'I will answer your question,' I replied, 'if this is the matter on which the court is about to pronounce judgment.' He could say nothing. I was praised and congratulated for having avoided compromising my credit by a safe but discreditable answer, and for having escaped the snare of such an invidious question. He was thoroughly frightened, and rushes up to Cæcilius Celer and Fabius Justus, and begs them to reconcile us. This was not enough for him; he goes off to Spurinna, and, with that cringing manner which he always has when he is frightened, he says to him, 'Pray, go and call on Pliny the very first thing in the morning (be sure you do this, for I can't endure my anxiety any longer), and do your best to prevail on him not to be angry with me.' I had risen early; there comes a message from Spurinna to this effect, 'I am coming to see you.' I sent back word, 'I am myself coming to you.' Well, we meet on the way in

Livia's portico; Spurinna explains the wishes of Regulus, and adds his own entreaties, as you would expect from a very good man on behalf of one wholly unlike himself. I replied to him, 'You will yourself clearly perceive what message you think had best be sent back to Regulus; you ought not to be misled by me. I am waiting the return of Mauricus (he had not yet come back from exile); I can't give you an answer either way, because I mean to do whatever he decides on, for he ought to be my leader in this matter, and I ought to be simply his follower.' A few days afterwards, Regulus met me at one of the prætor's levees; he kept close to me, and begged me to give him a private interview. He then told me he was afraid that a remark he had once made in the Court of the Hundred still rankled in my mind. The remark, he said, was made when he was replying as counsel to myself and to Satrius Rufus, and was this—'Satrius Rufus, who does not attempt to rival Cicero, and who is content with the eloquence of our own day.' My answer to him was—'I see now that you meant it ill-naturedly, because you admit it yourself; but your remark might have been taken as intended to be complimentary. I do try to rival Cicero, and I am not content with the eloquence of our own day. It is, I think, the height of folly not to propose to one's self the best pattern for imitation. But how comes it that you remember this circumstance so distinctly, and have forgotten the occasion in court when you asked me what was my opinion of the loyalty of Modestus?' Pale as he always looks, he then turned as pale as

death, and stammered out that he asked the question, not to hurt me, but to hurt Modestus. Note the fellow's vindictive cruelty; he actually confessed to himself that he wished to do an injury to one in exile. He added an admirable reason for his conduct. 'Modestus,' he said, 'in a letter written by him which was read out before Domitian, used the following expression —Regulus, of all two-footed creatures the wickedest.' And Modestus was perfectly right. This ended our conversation. I did not wish to go further in the matter, or to tie my hands in any way, till Mauricus had returned. I am very well aware that Regulus is a formidable person. He is rich, influential, courted by many, feared by many, and to be feared often does more for a man than to be loved."

The following letter, written after the death of Regulus, describes some of the eccentric devices by which he endeavoured to render his pleading in court more effective.

PLINY TO ARRIANUS.*

"Sometimes I miss Regulus in our courts. I cannot say I deplore his loss. My reason for missing him is, that he really respected his profession, that he bestowed infinite labour on it, made himself pale with study and anxiety, wrote out his speeches, though he could not get them by heart. He had a queer practice of painting round his right eye if he was counsel for the plaintiff, his left if he was for the defendant; of wearing a white patch on his forehead; of asking the

* Epist. vi. 1.

soothsayers what the issue of the action would be, and so forth. Yet all this eccentricity was really due to his extreme earnestness in his profession. There was another thing which was very acceptable to the counsel who were engaged with him. He asked for unlimited time in speaking, and he got together an audience. What could be pleasanter than to be able to speak as long as you liked before a full court, when the odium of the whole arrangement rested with another? Still, at any rate, Regulus has done well in ridding the world of his presence; and he would have done better had he done it sooner. As things are now, he really might have lived without hurt to the state under an emperor in whose time he could not possibly do mischief. And so one may very properly feel that one sometimes misses him. Since his death it has become an established practice for the court to give, and for the counsel to ask, a limited time for the pleadings. For both those who plead wish to have done with it rather than to go on speaking, and the judges who hear the case are anxious to decide it rather than to continue sitting on the bench. Such neglect, such apathy—in a word, such utter indifference as to our professional duties—has come over us. Are we wiser than our ancestors, or is our practice more just and reasonable than the law itself, which liberally grants ever so many hours, and days, and adjournments? Are we to consider them dull and beyond measure tedious, and to fancy that we speak more clearly, understand more readily, decide matters with more scrupulous care, because we get through cases in

fewer hours than they took days? O Regulus! it was by zeal in your profession that you secured an advantage which is but rarely given to the highest integrity. For my own part, whenever I have to hear a case (and this I do oftener than I plead), I give the greatest amount of time which any counsel asks. It is, I think, rash to try to conjecture to what length a cause yet to be tried is likely to run, and to set a limit to an affair the extent of which is unknown to you. The very first duty which a judge owes to his position is to have that patience which constitutes an important part of justice. Even superfluous matter had better be brought forward than any really necessary point be omitted. Besides, it is impossible to say whether it is superfluous till you have heard it."

The following letter shows up Regulus in his character of a fortune-hunter:—

PLINY TO CALVISIUS.*

"I have a first-rate story for you, or rather two stories—for the one, which is quite fresh, reminded me of the other. It makes no difference with which I begin. Verania, Piso's wife (I mean the Piso adopted by the Emperor Galba), was seriously ill. Regulus pays her a visit. Think of the man's brazen impudence in calling on her in her illness, when he had been her husband's bitterest enemy, and was utterly hated by the lady herself! It would have been bad enough if he had confined himself to a mere call. He

* Epist. ii. 20.

actually sat down by her bedside, and asked her the day and the hour of her birth. When she had told him, he looks very grave, fixes his eyes on her, moves his lips, makes passes with his fingers, and goes through a calculation. After keeping the unhappy woman for a long while in suspense, he says, 'You are at a perilous crisis of your life, but you will recover. To convince you of this, I will consult an augur whose art I have often tested.' Without a moment's delay, he had a sacrifice offered up, and he declares that the victim's entrails present signs exactly agreeing with what may be inferred from the stars. The lady, whose danger made her credulous, asks for some writing-paper, and puts down in her will a legacy for Regulus. Very soon she becomes worse; and, as she is dying, she calls the man a rogue, a treacherous and worse than perjured villain, because he had actually sworn falsely to her by his son's life. It is a practice of Regulus, as wicked as it is frequent, to call down the wrath of heaven, which he so often invokes to witness a lie, on the head of his unhappy son.

"Velleius Blæsus—the wealthy man, I mean, who rose to the consulship—was in his last illness, and wished to alter his will. Regulus, who hoped to get something out of the alteration, because he had of late paid court to him, begged and implored the physicians to lengthen his life by all possible means. When the will had been signed and sealed, he changed his character and reversed his tone, and said to these same physicians, 'How long do you mean to keep the unhappy man in misery; why do you grudge one to

whom you cannot give life, the happy release of death?' Blæsus dies, and as if he had heard everything, leaves Regulus not a farthing. Are two stories enough for you, or would you like to have a third, after the manner of school exercises? Well, I have got one for you. Aurelia, an extremely elegant lady, when about to set the seal to her will, had put on a remarkably handsome dress. Regulus came to witness the signature, and on his arrival he said to the lady, 'Pray, leave me by your will the dress you have on.' Aurelia thought the man was joking. Regulus pressed the matter in earnest, and, to cut my story short, he actually made the lady open her desk, and add a clause to her will, leaving him the dress. All the time she was writing it, he kept his eye on her, and looked to see whether she had really written it. The man gets bequests and legacies just as if he deserved them. Why do I dwell on such matters, when we are living in a country in which wickedness and roguery have long been able to command as great, nay, greater rewards than virtue and honour? Look at Regulus; from abject poverty he has made his way, by all sorts of rascality, to such prodigious wealth that he himself told me that when he asked an augur how soon he should be able to amass a fortune of half a million, he found that twice that amount was promised him by the signs exhibited by the victim's entrails. And he will get it, if he only pursues his present course of making persons, when they prepare their wills, add to them clauses which they never intended to insert."

It would appear, from the two following letters

which describe his strange demeanour on the death of his son, that Regulus had all the extravagant affectation which is sometimes found in the *nouveaux riches.*

PLINY TO ATTIUS CLEMENS.*

"Regulus has lost his son; the only misfortune he did not deserve, and I am not sure whether he thinks it a misfortune. The boy had quick parts, but one could not be at all sure how he would turn out; still, he seemed to have a capacity for virtue, were he not to grow up like his father. Regulus gave him the legal release from parental control, so that the lad might become heir to his mother's property, and having done this (I speak of the current rumours, based on the man's character), he fawned on the lad with a disgusting show of fond affection, which in a parent was utterly out of place. Incredible, you will say, but only consider the man. At any rate he deplores his death in a most insane fashion. The boy had a number of ponies for riding and driving, of big and little dogs, and a host of pet nightingales, parrots, and blackbirds. All these Regulus had slaughtered on the funeral pile. It was not grief, but an ostentatious parade of grief. A crowd of visitors throng to his house. All hate and detest the man, and as if they loved and esteemed him, they hurry to his doors and hang round them, and, to tell you in a word what I really think, in seeking to do Regulus a kindness they make themselves exactly like him. He keeps

* Epist. iv. 2.

himself in his park on the other side the Tiber, where he has built huge colonnades over a vast extent of ground, and set up a number of his own statues on the river-side; for with all his intense avarice he is extravagant, and in the midst of his infamy he loves fame. At this very unhealthy time of year he is boring society, and he feels pleasure and consolation in being a bore. He says he wishes to marry—a piece of perversity, like all his other conduct. You will soon hear of the marriage of one who is in mourning, the marriage of an old man. In the first case, it is too soon, in the second, too late. You ask me the grounds of my conjecture; it is not because he says it himself, for he is as false as false can be; it is only because one may be sure that Regulus will do whatever is highly improper."

PLINY TO CATIUS LEPIDUS.*

"I often tell you that Regulus has a certain force of character. It is wonderful to see how he gets through a thing to which he has applied himself. He made up his mind to mourn the death of his son; he is absolutely unequalled as a mourner. It was his fancy to get together an immense number of statues and pictures of his son; so he sends orders to all the sculptors and painters, and has the boy represented on canvas, in wax, bronze, silver, gold, ivory, marble, &c. &c. He himself actually invited to his house a numerous audience to hear him read his son's memoir—the

* Epist. iv. 7.

memoir of a mere boy. However, he read it; he even had a thousand copies made of it, and distributed throughout Italy and the provinces. He had a public notice put up, that the town-councils were to choose out of their number the man with the best voice, to read the book to the people. It was really done. Only suppose he had used this force of character, or whatever you call this earnestness, in trying to get what one wants, for better ends, and what good would he have been able to accomplish! There is, however, less of this quality about the good than the bad, and as (to quote Thucydides) 'folly genders confidence, while thoughtfulness produces hesitation,' so modesty often cripples the action of virtue, as effrontery strengthens vice. Regulus is an example. He has weak lungs, a confused look, a stammering tongue, a slow and dull imagination, no memory—nothing in short but a sort of frantic energy; and yet by his impudence and mad vehemence he has won the reputation of an orator. Cato has a famous definition of an orator, which Herennius Senecio has curiously reversed about Regulus, thus: 'An orator is a bad man who has no skill in speaking.' Cato certainly has *not* more correctly described the true orator than Senecio has hit off Regulus."

We now take leave of Regulus. The tone of this last letter looks as if Pliny's dislike of the man led him to speak more contemptuously of him than facts could have warranted him in doing. If Regulus

laboured under so many natural disadvantages, his success in his profession must have implied a force of character of a remarkably high order. He and many of his class were no doubt morally as bad as it was possible to be, but they were by no means intellectually contemptible.

CHAPTER VI.

MEN OF LETTERS AT ROME.

CIRCUMSTANCES combined to produce at Rome in the days of the Empire a very considerable amount of literary activity. For more than two centuries the wealth of the whole civilised world had been pouring into the capital. This influx had promoted the growth of two things, which to the men of the old *régime*—to such Conservatives, for instance, as Cato—seemed equally odious, luxury and culture. The first impulse of the monied class—a class whose riches equalled, if they did not surpass, even the largest fortunes of modern times—was to surround itself with the means of material enjoyment and display. But it was not long before more refined tastes began to be developed. Among the spoils of the world with which a long series of conquests had crowded the palaces of Rome, were to be found the treasures of Hellenic civilisation—manuscripts, pictures, and statues, the contents of the libraries and museums which the Greek, almost invariably a scholar as well as a soldier, had founded so plentifully in Eastern Europe and Western Asia. With

these had come, in throngs which excited the wrath and scorn of satirists like Juvenal, the teachers of literature and art. From the decaying and impoverished cities of the East they crowded to the place where a nation of wealthy pupils was waiting to welcome and to remunerate their services. At the same time, the class which was thus so abundantly furnished with all the appliances of culture, was profoundly affected in its habits of life by the revolution which substituted an empire for a republic. One great resource in which men of wealth find occupation, which to our own monied class, for instance, is so fascinating—the devotion to public affairs—ceased to be available at Rome. Men were still selected, indeed, from the highest nobility to fill the offices of proconsul and prætor in the provinces; and at Rome the old magistracies of the republic and the senate still remained, though they had but the shadow of their former dignity. But politics had ceased to furnish a profession. Tacitus complains of the men of his time, that they were as ignorant about their country as if it were not their own. Under such emperors as Nero, men of average character, who on the one hand would not stoop to the vile art of the sycophant and the informer, and, on the other, did not choose to venture their lives in impossible attempts at reform, clung to the safe retirement of private life, while a vigorous ruler like Trajan kept all power in his own hands, and left nothing for his subjects to do. At the same time, the bar had greatly degenerated from that which Hortensius and Cicero had adorned. It was no longer the avenue to power, though it was still the

road to office, and might be made the means of accumulating riches. When we consider these circumstances, it does not surprise us to find that literature furnished occupation not only to a numerous class of professional writers, but to many men of rank and wealth.

Among these must be ranked C. SILIUS ITALICUS. He was by many years Pliny's senior, having been born A.D. 25. He followed with success the profession of an advocate, and had been a member of the Hundred Court. Unfortunately for his character, he became a prominent person in the state when it was passing through its most evil day. A sinister rumour which our author mentions, and evidently does not disbelieve, had attributed to him a share in the infamous practices and gains of the informers. In reward, possibly, for these services, he was raised in the last year of Nero's reign to the consulship. The "Lists of the consuls" record that he, with his colleagues, abdicated office, and that the Emperor, then in his last paroxysm of suspicion, succeeded to the vacancy "without colleague." In the terrible year that followed, "the year of the three emperors," and while enjoying the dangerous honour of an intimate friendship with Vitellius, he behaved with wisdom and courtesy. When that Emperor, pressed hard by the troops of Vespasian, sought to secure his safety by resigning his throne, and held for this purpose an interview with the elder brother of his successful rival, Silius was one of the two witnesses who were present. The government of the province of Asia, a province which may be roughly described as comprising the western half of the penin-

sula of Asia Minor, followed in due course. It was one of the chief commands in the empire, and Silius exercised it with great distinction and credit. After this he took no active part in political life, though he was still a prominent personage at Rome—"prominent," says Pliny, "but exercising no power and exciting no hostility." In this position his conduct was so blameless, that the errors of his earlier life were willingly forgotten. No house in the capital was more thronged, or by more sincere admirers. At some time in the short reign of Nerva, warned by his increasing infirmities, he retired from the capital, which, as Pliny mentions with admiring surprise, he did not even revisit to pay his respects to a new emperor, when Nerva was succeeded by Trajan. He was in his seventy-fifth year when the pain of some incurable disease, probably a cancer, made him resolve to put an end to his life. Abstaining from food was then the fashionable method of suicide, and the old man resolutely starved himself to death. The name of Silius is known to students of Latin literature by the accident which has preserved his tedious poem on the Punic war. Of the poetical merits of that work little need be said. The author was wholly without genius—an imitator, not surpassingly skilful, of Virgil. And he offends at least modern taste by the mythological machinery which he introduces into the narrative of historical events. Whatever interest attaches to his verses belongs to the antiquarian or geographical information which they convey. As a poet, he seems indeed to have been little esteemed by his contemporaries. Pliny disposes of him with a

very brief criticism. "He used to write verses with more diligence than force." He has more to say of him as a connoisseur and collector. These tastes were developed in him till they grew to a positive frenzy for buying. "He became the possessor of several country houses in the same localities, was passionately fond of the last acquisition, and left the others to neglect. All of them were crowded with books, with statues, with busts. These last he not only kept about him, he absolutely worshipped." Among them was one which connected together his literary and his artistic tastes. It was the likeness of Virgil, and he held it in especial reverence. He was accustomed to keep the birthday of his master with more solemnity than he kept his own, and to visit the tomb where the great poet lay on the shore of the Bay of Naples with such respect as worshippers pay to a temple.

Much nearer to Pliny, and bound to him by the ties of intimate friendship, was C. CORNELIUS TACITUS. When, after his uncle's death, Pliny came, still a mere youth, to Rome, and began to practise in the law courts, he found Tacitus at the head of his profession. A splendid alliance (he had married the daughter of the great soldier Agricola) had assured his position, and he seemed likely to rise to the highest eminence in the state. Some reason unknown—it may have been a command in the provinces, it may have been the now precarious position of his father-in-law—took him for several years from the capital, to which he returned only to become an unwilling witness of the horrors of the last years of Domitian. In the early days of the

better time that followed he took an active part in public affairs. We have seen him associated with Pliny in one of the great provincial trials. In A.D. 100 we find him appointed consul to supply the vacancy caused by the death of Verginius Rufus. The funeral oration over the old man, the Wellington of his day, who almost seemed to rise above the throne which he had once refused, was pronounced by his successor. "It was the crown of his good fortune," cried the enthusiastic friend of the orator, "that he found in Cornelius Tacitus the most eloquent of panegyrists." With his consulate, however, his public life seems to have closed. Affairs of state must always be unattractive to men of genius under an absolute ruler, whether he be an enlightened prince like Trajan, or a suspicious tyrant like Domitian. How wholly Tacitus had withdrawn himself from them is evident, when we find him recommending to the good offices of Pliny a certain Naso, who was a candidate for one of the magistracies, wholly ignorant of the fact that it was under the auspices of Pliny that Naso had originally started.

Tacitus had probably made his first essay in literature — if the 'Dialogue about Famous Orators' be really his — at a time when Pliny was still a boy. His 'Life of Agricola' was published in the reign of Nerva, his 'Treatise on Germany' shortly after the accession of Trajan. Meanwhile he was living on terms of close friendship with Pliny. The two constantly interchanged works for mutual criticism. On the side of Pliny these seem to have been, for the

most part, revisions of speeches which he had delivered. Among the works which Tacitus submitted to the judgment of his friend may have been the 'Treatise on Germany.' About the others we cannot even form a conjecture. He was busy, however, with preparations for a greater work, his History, which had for its subject the period beginning with the accession of Galba and ending with the death of Domitian. We have seen how, in his search for materials, he applied to Pliny for such information as he could give about the great eruption of Vesuvius. In another letter we find his friend volunteering particulars of an incident out of which he believed himself to have come with considerable credit, and begging that it might find a place in the forthcoming work. The intimacy that grew up out of this community of literary interests became very close, and the Letters repeatedly express the joy and pride which it gave to the younger and less distinguished of the two friends. In one place he remarks with pleasure how frequently both were named in the wills of friends and acquaintances for legacies of the same amount. In another he relates to a correspondent, with great glee, a story which he had heard from Tacitus himself. The historian, it seems, was sitting with a stranger, looking on at the games in the circus. After much learned talk his new acquaintance asked him, "Are you of Italy or from the provinces?" "You know me," replied the historian, "and that from your reading." "Then," rejoined the other, "you must be either Tacitus or Pliny."

To a third man of letters, M. VALERIUS MARTIALIS,

Pliny stood in the relation of a patron rather than a friend. Martial was a native of Bilbilis in Spain, who had come towards the end of the reign of Nero to seek his fortune in Rome. He soon attracted the notice of the Emperor Titus; and Domitian, who had at least one redeeming quality in a genuine love of letters, even admitted him to his intimacy—a favour which he repaid by flattery so gross as not to admit of any defence. It is possible that one whose adulation of the tyrant stood on record against him, did not feel himself at ease under the new *régime*. Anyhow he left Rome early in Trajan's reign to return to his native country. There about four years afterwards he died, and Pliny records his decease in a letter,* a part of which it will be worth while to quote: "I hear that Valerius Martialis is dead, and I am sorry for it. He was a clever man, of a pointed wit, and of much spirit. In his writing there was plenty of flavour, plenty of bitterness, and not less of straightforward honesty. I presented him, when he was leaving Rome, with some money for his travelling expenses. So much was due to our friendship, so much to the verses he wrote about me.† It was an old custom to

* Epist. iii. 23.

† In these verses (Epig. x. 19) Martial addresses his Muse, and bids her carry his book to Pliny at his house on the Esquiline Hill. (The Esquiline had become the fashionable quarter of Rome since Mæcenas had built his great mansion there.) The latter part of the Epigram, which Pliny quotes in his letter, may be roughly Englished as follows:—

"Only take care, my tipsy Muse,
That a fit and proper time you choose

compliment with distinction or money those who had written the praise either of persons or of states. Within our days it has, like other good and honourable practices, grown obsolete, and sooner perhaps than any. When we cease to do what deserves praise, we soon begin to think that praise is a silly thing." The transaction—such a praise paid for in money—bears a curious resemblance to what was a recognised practice among ourselves, till, happily both for the purse and for the honour of our men of letters, the public superseded the patron.

Of the merits of Silius Italicus, of Tacitus, and of Martial, we are able to form a judgment for ourselves. Of the other literary contemporaries of whom Pliny speaks, nothing has been preserved, nor are their names even mentioned elsewhere. PASSENNUS PAULLUS, of whom we shall have an anecdote to relate hereafter, was a fellow-townsman and descendant of Propertius, and had inherited a talent for writing elegiac verse. He also appears to have done what Roman poets seldom did, to have imitated Horace. Another friend,

> To knock at my Pliny's eloquent gates.
> To the stern Minerva he devotes
> All his days, and elaborates
> What may win the Hundred Judges' votes,—
> Speeches which this and the coming age
> May venture to match with Tully's page.
> When may you safely go?—when the light
> Of the lamps is burning late, and the night
> Grows wild with the wine-cup, and the rose
> Is Queen of the feast, and the perfume flows
> From dripping locks. In that hour of thine
> Stern Catos may read this book of mine."

CANINIUS RUFUS, Pliny encourages in his design of celebrating in verse Trajan's campaigns in Dacia. "What subject," he says, "could you find so fresh, so full of matter, so wide—in a word, so poetical, and, though it deals with the most absolute truth, so romantic? New rivers made to flow, new bridges thrown over rivers, mountain precipices occupied with camps, a king driven from his palace, driven even from life, yet never despairing—these are the things of which you will sing." But there would be a vast difficulty, he tells his friend, in raising even his genius to the height of so vast an undertaking; and another, not to be despised, in the task of getting the barbarous names of Dacian chiefs and towns to suit the measure of his verse, which was, apparently, the Greek hexameter. There was the name of the king, for instance, Diurpaneus. All that could be said was, that he must take Homeric licence, and Homer was accustomed to alter much more tractable words.

VERGILIUS ROMANUS, a clever writer of burlesques and of comedies, which Pliny, a kindly, or perhaps it should be said, even a flattering critic, thought equal to those of Plautus and Terence, was another member of the same literary circle. In his praise of Pompeius Saturninus, an advocate like himself, our author is still more enthusiastic. He was great as a writer; hear or read his speeches, you liked them equally well. History he wrote with the same eloquence, only in a more concise and compressed style. And verses he could write like Calvus or Catullus, even to the skilful insertion of a certain archaic roughness. His last work had been a

volume of letters. It was true that he declared them to be written by his wife. In any case the whole credit of them was his; for, says Pliny, his wife, whom he had taken unmarried from her father's house, must have received from him any learning or culture that she had—a significant remark, and perfectly consistent with what we learn from other sources, as showing that whatever education a Roman woman could boast was for the most part acquired not in the home but in the world. Another lawyer of literary tastes, whose premature death Pliny laments, was C. FANNIUS. He had snatched some time from the toils of his profession to write the 'Lives of the Victims of Nero.' Nine books only had been written; a singular dream had warned him that he would not be permitted to add any more. He had dreamt that he was lying on his bed with his writing-desk before him, that Nero entered the chamber, sat down upon the couch, opened the first volume (this had been already published), and read it to the end, did the same with the second and the third, and then departed. Fannius, in his terror, believed that he should write no more than the dead tyrant had read, and the dream possibly did something to accomplish itself.

We must now make distinct mention of a group of accomplished foreigners, whom Pliny seems to have regarded with the same respect and affection that he showed to his Roman friends.

EUPHRATES was a Stoic philosopher, of Greek race, born (for the accounts vary) in Egypt or Syria. It was in the latter country that Pliny, then a young soldier,

had made his acquaintance, and had been admitted to his intimacy. The two met again in Rome, whither the philosopher had removed, probably attracted by the liberal patronage which the capital extended to learning. His tall stature, his handsome countenance, his long hair, and huge white beard, and an appearance wholly free from that affectation of squalor in which some of his brethren delighted, attracted favour before he spoke, and his speech was singularly winning. He discourses, says Pliny, with subtlety, with dignity, with elegance; frequently he even gives to his language all the fulness and richness of Plato. His style is copious and varied, and remarkably winning, so as to move and carry on with it even reluctant hearers. The philosopher's position was strengthened by his marriage with one of the most distinguished of the Roman families settled in his native province. Pliny mentions with praise the special care with which he educated his children, and seems indeed to have regarded him generally with the utmost affection and respect. "Why," he cries, "should I say more of a man whose company I cannot enjoy? Only, surely, to vex myself the more because I cannot. I am occupied by the duties of my office, a most important and a most troublesome one. I sit in front of the tribunal; I countersign documents; I settle accounts; I write a vast amount of the most illiterate literature." This "illiterate literature" reminds us of Charles Lamb's allusion to the volumes which he had left behind him in the India House. Euphrates consoled his friend in a very sensible fashion. "It was

a part," he said, "nay, the most honourable part, of philosophy, this discharge of public affairs, this hearing and deciding of causes, this discovering and practising of justice, this actual using of what they, the philosophers, taught." Euphrates is mentioned by others of his contemporaries. Both Arrian, a pupil of Epictetus, and author of the 'Expedition of Alexander,' and the Emperor Aurelius Antoninus, speak in high praise of his eloquence. Philostratus gives an account of him in his 'Lives of the Sophists,' where he accuses him of servility. He is said to have reached an advanced age, and to have begged and obtained permission from the Emperor Hadrian to put an end to his life.

ARTEMIDORUS was another Greek philosopher with whom Pliny made acquaintance when he was serving in Syria. He seems to have followed his friend to Rome. Certainly he was in the capital when, in A.D. 93, Domitian banished the philosophers. Pliny was one of the prætors for the year, and, though the reign of terror had begun, though the storm had fallen with especial violence on his circle of friends, and was threatening himself, he stood manfully by his friend, even venturing to visit him at the house which he occupied in the suburbs. At the same time he rendered him substantial service by the present of a large sum of money. The philosopher had made himself liable for a debt of considerable amount; and Pliny, who had, he tells us, himself to borrow the money, furnished him with the means of discharging it. When the accession of Nerva brought happier times, Artemidorus returned to Rome, and Pliny renewed his ac-

quaintance with him. "Of all who call themselves philosophers, you will scarcely," he says, "find more than one or two so single-hearted and so true. I put aside his marvellous endurance both of cold and of heat, his industry, which no labours can tire, his indifference to all the pleasures of eating and drinking, the control which he exercises over his eyes and his thoughts. These are great things, or might be in another man. In him these are but of very little weight, compared with those other virtues which made C. Musonius choose him for his son-in-law out of suitors of all ranks." Artemidorus, like Euphrates, had married into a Roman family. His father-in-law, Musonius Rufus, was an enthusiastic adherent of the Stoic philosophy—so enthusiastic, indeed, that he nearly met his end by delivering an unseasonable lecture on his favourite tenets to the combatants, when the troops of Vespasian, under the command of Antonius Pronus, were forcing their way into Rome against the desperate resistance of the adherents of Vitellius. It perfectly suits his character that he should have bestowed his daughter on a man whom many would probably have despised as a penniless scholar.

A third distinguished Greek, Isæus, seems to have been a visitor rather than a resident at Rome. "More fluent than Isæus" is Juvenal's description of the ready speech which he mentions among the qualities of the Greek adventurers who were thronging to the capital. He seems to have been something of an *improvisatore*, and Pliny gives a very admiring account * of his per-

* Epist. ii. 3.

formances. "I had heard a wonderful report of Isæus before his coming; but it was not equal to the reality. He possesses the utmost readiness, copiousness, and abundance of language; speaks always extempore, yet always as if he had written his speech long before. His style is genuinely Greek—I may say, Attic. His introductions are terse, elegant, attractive, sometimes weighty in matter, and loftily conceived. He suggests several themes, and permits his audience to choose, doing this often without preparation. He rises, arranges his cloak, and begins. At once he has everything almost equally ready at hand. Meanings that you never saw are suggested to you, and words—what words they are!—exquisitely chosen and polished. The wideness of his reading, his great practice in writing, are clearly shown in these unprepared displays. His preface is to the point, his narrative is lucid, his attack spirited, his summing up forcible, his rhetorical ornament noble. In a word, he teaches, delights, and affects you; and you cannot decide which of the three he does best. His reflections are frequent; frequent, too, his syllogisms, as well as condensed and carefully finished—no small merit to attain even in a written style. His memory is beyond belief; he repeats from far back what he has spoken extempore, and does not miss a single word. Such is the habit of excellence to which he has reached by study and practice, for night and day he does nothing, hears nothing, says nothing else. He has passed his sixtieth year, and is still a scholar, and nothing more. Than this class of men, indeed, I know nothing more single-hearted, more

genuine, or more excellent. For we who have to go through the rough work of the forum and of real disputes contract something, however unwilling we may be, of evil cleverness. The school, the lecture-room, the imaginary case, the whole affair, in short, is innocent and harmless, and quite as full of enjoyment, especially to the old. For my part I think Isæus not only the most eloquent but the happiest of men; and you," he adds to his correspondent, "unless you are anxious to make his acquaintance, must be made of stone or iron."

In this literary and learned society Pliny found, it is evident, a very keen and genuine enjoyment. We must perhaps take with a certain reservation his lamentations over the distraction of business, public and private, which kept him from the learned leisure in which he delighted. He was fond, it is evident, of the distinction which was given by office; he rejoiced in the triumphs which he won, and which he does not fail to describe to his correspondents, in the courts of law. Nevertheless he really loved literature. He combined indeed, with no little success, the character of a man of letters, a patron, and a critic. Of his authorship we speak elsewhere. His patronage was shown, as we have seen, in substantial help to authors. Such help was, of course, but a small matter to a man of wealth so large. There was more of real value in the genuine sympathy which he felt with their productions—a sympathy the want of which has often made offensive the liberality of the most munificent patron. He was always ready with advice and encouragement, and made it a special duty to be present at the public

readings, to be described in the next chapter. This help was of a kind which no mere man of wealth could give. Pliny's countenance and approval, as a man of wide culture and genuine taste, must have been highly valued. His criticism, indeed, we can hardly help thinking, as we read the high compliments which he pays to the authors whom he mentions, must have been of a very kindly character. Yet in the cases where we are able to compare his literary opinion of *contemporary* writers — the true test, it is almost needless to say, of critical sagacity— with the verdict of succeeding time, we find him to have been right. He dismisses with a very few words of modified praise the tedious heroics of Silius Italicus, while he recognises the wit and brilliance which have given Martial the first place among epigrammatists, and fully appreciated in Tacitus the solid qualities of the greatest of Roman historians. And in more than one of his letters, where he deals with general literary topics, the soundness of his judgment is evident. Nothing, for instance, could be more judicious than the literary advice which he gives in the following letter:* "You ask me what I think should be your method of study in the retirement which you have been now for some time enjoying. As useful as anything, as it is frequently recommended, is the practice of translating either your Greek into Latin, or your Latin into Greek. By practising this you acquire propriety and dignity of expression, an abundant choice of the beauties of style, power in description, and in the imitation of the best

* Epist. vii. 9.

models a facility of creating such models for yourself. Besides, what may escape you when you read, cannot escape you when you translate. From this follows a quick appreciation of beauty and sound taste. There is no reason why you should not write about the subjects which you have been already reading, keeping to the same matter and line of argument, as if you were a rival; should then compare it with what you have read, and carefully consider whether the author has been the happier of the two, and wherefore. You may congratulate yourself much if sometimes you have done better, but should be much ashamed if he is always superior. Sometimes you may select even very famous passages, and compete with what you select. The competition is daring enough, but, as it is private, cannot be called impudent. Sometimes you can go over a speech again, when it has passed from your memory, retaining much, omitting more, inserting some things, and rewriting others. This is, I know, a laborious and tedious task, but its very difficulties make it useful; so hard is it to work one's self up again into the old heat, to recover the energy which has once suffered break or interruption, and, worse than all, to put new limbs into a body already complete without disturbing the old. . . . Sometimes you should take a subject from history, and you might give more care to the composition of your letters. In speaking, you will often find a necessity for passages of description in the style of history—nay, even in that of poetry. From letters you acquire a simple and terse style. You will do quite right again in refreshing yourself with poetry; I do not say with

any long and continuous work, but with something neat and short—a most appropriate variety in occupation and business of whatever kind. . . . Perhaps I have given you more than you wanted. Yet I have left out one point. I have not told you what I think you should read; though, indeed, I did tell you when I told you what you should write. Remember to be careful in your choice of authors of every kind. They say that one ought to read much, but not many books."

There is sound sense in all this; and in the following letter, with which this chapter may be concluded, we have a genuine expression of feeling :—

"I find my joy and my solace in literature. There is no gladness that this cannot increase, no sorrow that it cannot lessen. Troubled as I am by the ill-health of my wife, by the dangerous condition—sometimes, alas! by the death—of my friends, I fly to my studies as the one alleviation of my fears. They do me this service—they make me understand my troubles better, and bear them more patiently. It is my custom, whatever I purpose to publish, previously to try by the judgment of my friends, of whom you stand among the first. Pray give your best attention to the book which you will receive with this letter, for I fear that I, in my sorrow, have scarcely given mine to it. I could so far command my grief as to write; not so far as to write with an unoccupied and cheerful mind. Certainly there is a pleasure in these pursuits, but they themselves prosper best when the heart is light."

* Epist. viii. 19.

CHAPTER VII.

PUBLIC READINGS.

We shall be much mistaken if we form our ideas of the supply of books in Rome from what we know of the scarcity and costliness of this article in the age that intervened between the fall of the Empire and the invention of printing, or perhaps it should rather be said, the revival of learning. In medieval Europe, and more particularly among the Northern nations, manuscripts were among the rarest of the possessions of the wealthy. The sale of them was negotiated with as much solemnity as was the sale of an estate; the most solid security was exacted when they were lent. A score of them constituted a library such as individuals or even corporations were proud to possess. But in this, as in other matters, European civilisation had greatly retrograded from what it was during the first centuries of the Christian era. In the days of Pliny, at least, as we know from the express testimony of a contemporary,* copies of popular books were produced

* Martial tells a friend that a book which he had lately published ("a slender book," he calls it; it might be printed in

in great numbers, and at a very cheap rate. But while this proves both that there existed a considerable class of readers, and that the mechanical means of satisfying their demand were to be found in much completeness, it is easy enough to see that there was nothing like the thoroughly-organised system of communication between the writer and the public that has been created in modern times. It is not to be forgotten—though this, of course, is not the chief thing to be considered—that the manuscript was less attractive, less handy, and, in short, less readable, than the printed book. An ordinary Roman could, of course, peruse with ease what it now takes a practised scholar to decipher; but it is impossible not to believe that something was wanting to the pleasure of the reader when there was no distinction in the size of letters, no separation between words, and none of the perpetual help of punctuation. More important, however, was the question of publishing.

This now is a process sufficiently simple and easy. There is a large class of men whose business it is to introduce an author to his readers. The competition between them is so keen that probably no book of merit, a few exceptional cases allowed for, fails to obtain an introduction to the world. Such facilities, if they were not altogether wanting to the literary men

about thirty-two pages of the volume which the reader has in his hands) could be purchased for four sesterces (about equivalent to tenpence in our money); and that if this price seemed too high, a cheaper copy might be procured for half that price, "and yet," he adds, "the bookseller will get a profit."

of Rome, were certainly not so fully developed. There were, indeed, booksellers both there and in the chief provincial cities. The poet Horace has preserved the name of a firm—"Sosii Brothers," as we should put it —who were the most eminent of their class in his time; and one of the passages in which he speaks of them may possibly be understood as meaning that they were accustomed to purchase works from authors as publishers now purchase a copyright. "Such a book," he says, speaking of one which possesses certain excellences, "earns money from the Sosii,"—a phrase, however, which might be used if these Sosii were merely booksellers, and paid over to the author the money which they had received. "Booksellers" (*bibliopolæ*) they are certainly called; and though they may have sometimes acted the part of publishers, and probably did so in arranging for the copying of books, and the ornamentation of the copies, it is quite clear that an intending author did not find matters made so simple and easy as, by the organisation of the trade in books, they now are. To put the matter shortly, there was no market in which the value of his wares might be readily appraised. The want of this compelled him to appeal directly to the public which he wished to address. He had to learn from the opinion of a larger circle than that of his immediate friends, whether his book was worth publishing—a process which, we must remember, was difficult and costly; and, in the event of a favourable judgment, he wished to make the intended publication known as widely as possible. To gain these objects, he would "recite" or read his

compositions in public. We do not hear of the practice in the days of the Republic, when men were, we may suppose, too busy for such things; but both Horace and Ovid speak of it, and the allusions become more frequent when we come to the time of Pliny and his contemporaries. The method of proceeding may be described in a few words. The first care was to provide some place capable of holding a large audience. Sometimes, in the case, we may suppose, of writers who had already acquired a reputation, the temple of Apollo, the public library of Rome, was obtained for the purpose. Sometimes a convenient room had to be hired. But an author, if his own house did not contain the necessary accommodation, was generally able to find a wealthy friend or patron who would supply what was wanted. Pliny mentions with praise one of his friends, Titinius Capito, as always ready to lend his house for this purpose. "If you want to recite," cries Juvenal, "Maculonus will lend you his house, will range his freedmen on the furthest benches, and will put in the proper places his strong-lunged friends; but he will not give what it costs to hire the benches, and to set up the galleries, and to fill the stage with chairs." The author's next care, we thus learn, after finding his room, was to fit it with seats for his audience; the chairs, we may presume, being meant, like those which fill the platform at our own public meetings, for distinguished personages or private friends, while the benches accommodated the general public. For himself, the reader provided a high chair and desk; sometimes he sought to commend himself

to his listeners by adorning his person with unusual splendour. It is not uncommon among ourselves to see a lecturer, a reader, or even a preacher, seeking to attract his hearers by the brilliancy of a diamond ring, or setting himself off to the best advantage by carefully-combed hair and a new coat; but we are taken at once into a totally different sphere of manners when we read that the reciter would sometimes put a gay-coloured hood on his head, bandages on his ears, and a woollen comforter round his neck. It still remained to secure an audience. The author, if he was a man of wealth and position, might reckon with certainty on a considerable number of hearers, of whose presence, and even of whose applause, he might be sure. The freedmen, whose obligation to their patrons was, notwithstanding their manumission, of no slight kind, and the whole crowd of clients, some of them men whom we are surprised to find in a position seemingly so humiliating, who were accustomed to pay him their court, and to receive from his hands the dole which acknowledged their service, would be sure to attend, and would scarcely fail to be unanimous in their judgment of the performance. If he was indebted to a patron for a room, the loan would include, as we have seen, the use of the accustomed body of *claqueurs*. A city like Rome would be sure to furnish a number of listeners, some of them, of course, mere idlers, who were willing to kill the time by listening to a poem, a play, or a history, if there was no chariot-race or show of gladiators to be seen; some—doubtless in the case of a man of note, many—who were attracted by a genuine

interest in literature. Around the reader was the array of his personal friends, whose attendance, indeed, on these occasions was one of the chief, and sometimes, it may be believed, one of the most laborious duties which society demanded from men of good position at Rome. "I must beg you to excuse me this particular day," writes Pliny to a friend. "Titinius Capito means to give a reading, and I cannot say whether I am more bound or more desirous to hear him. . . . He lends his house to readers; and, whether the reading be at his own home or elsewhere, he shows a remarkable kindness in making himself one of the audience: me certainly he has never failed, whenever he has happened to be in town." We have here a hint of what indeed must on reflection be sufficiently obvious, that the demand made by these readings on the time of a busy man, or a man of many friends, and made in many cases by writers of very moderate talent, was felt to be exceedingly onerous. Horace complains of the "troublesome reader," from whom learned and unlearned alike fled in terror, and who bored to death the luckless listeners who could not escape from him; and Juvenal, in his first Satire, apologetically introduces himself to the public by declaring that he could not always be a listener, "wearied as he had so often been by the 'Theseid' of the hoarse Codrus;"—the epithet "hoarse" suggesting with significant force the *length* of the poem which the audience had to endure. We must remember, indeed, that a man of education at Rome had not his literary appetite satiated with the abundance of

reading which constitutes one of the most serious burdens of modern life. Books, if not positively scarce, did not crowd upon him in overwhelming numbers; and the "light troops" of literature—magazines and pamphlets and newspapers—were altogether unknown. Still we cannot entirely withhold our sympathy from the offender of whose conduct Pliny complains in an amusing letter to his friend Senecio. "This year," he says, "has brought us a great crop of poets. During the whole month of April, there was scarcely a day on which some one did not give a reading. I am delighted to see that literature flourishes, that the powers of our writers have the opportunity of displaying themselves: yet audiences come but slowly to listen. Many persons sit in the lounging-places, and waste in gossip the time that they should spend in listening. They even have news brought to them whether the reader has entered, whether he has spoken his preface, whether he has got through a considerable part of his manuscript. Then at last they come, but come slowly and reluctantly: even then they do not stop, but go away before the end; some, indeed, in secret and by stealth, others with perfect openness and freedom. Good heavens! our fathers can remember how the Emperor Claudius, walking one day in the palace, and hearing a great shouting, inquired the cause. They told him that Nonianus was reading; whereupon he entered the room, wholly unexpected by the reader. Now, the idlest of men, after having been invited long before to attend, and reminded over and over again of the engagement, either do not come at all, or, if

they come, complain of having 'lost a day!'—the fact being that they have *not* lost it. I," continues Pliny, "have failed scarcely a single reader. True, most of them were my friends: and, indeed, there are scarcely any who love literature who are not also on friendly terms with me. This is the reason why I have stayed longer in town than I had intended to do. At last I am at liberty to seek my country retirement, and to write something—something *which I shall not read;* for I do not wish to seem to have been obliging rather than listening to my friends."

Sometimes it happened that one or other of the unwilling auditors, whom a friendly compulsion had brought to assist in proceedings which did not interest him, would avenge himself by an unwelcome interruption. We have spoken of Passennus Paullus, a writer of elegiac verses, modelled after the compositions of his townsman and relative, Propertius. Passennus had collected a number of friends to hear him read a new volume; among them a lawyer, Javolenus Priscus by name, with whom he was on very intimate terms. The poet began, "Priscus, you bid me;"—but was astounded by a sudden interruption from his friend,—"*I* do not bid you." We may illustrate this incident by supposing that Pope is reading in public his "Essay on Man," and has got as far as the opening words, "Come now, my St John," when St John (Bolingbroke), who is one of his audience, interrupts him with "*Come,* indeed!—not I." "Javolenus," says Pliny, "is a man of doubtful sanity, though he takes a share in public business, is summoned to consultations, and

even gives opinions on civil law." The fact is, that he was a very distinguished lawyer, some of whose legal wisdom is still preserved in the Pandects of Justinian. Possibly, in a fit of absence, while his mind was wandering to scenes more congenial and familiar, he was startled by hearing his name, and made the ludicrous reply which Pliny has preserved. Or if Passennus was one of the poets who had occupied with their readings nearly every day in April, — one of the busiest months, it must be remembered, for lawyers,— and Javolenus had been dragged from court to attend them, his "*I* don't bid you" may have been the expression of a pent-up annoyance, which no feelings of friendship could restrain. However this may be, we can very well imagine that, as Pliny says, the interruption threw something of a damp on the proceedings; and we can appreciate the wisdom of his advice, that "those who mean to read in public should not only be sane themselves, but also bring sane friends to hear them." Pliny's own practice in this matter he himself describes in a letter which shows both good sense and good feeling.* He had been writing, it seems, some poems of a lighter kind. "I chose," he continues, "for producing these, the most seasonable time and place. To accustom them in good time to be heard by listeners that are taking their ease, and at the dinner-table, I collected my friends in the month of July, when the law courts have least to do, and put writing-desks before their chairs. It so happened that on the morning of the day I was called away to an unexpected case in court.

* Epist. viii. 21.

This gave me opportunity for some words of preface. I begged my friends not to think that it showed me wanting in respect to what I had in hand if, when meaning to read, though it was only to friends and to a small audience (another word for friends), I did not abstain from the business of the forum. I added, that even in writing I followed this order—put my friendship before my pleasures, my business before my amusements, and wrote firstly for my friends, secondly for myself. My book contained a variety of compositions and metres. 'Tis thus that I am accustomed, trusting but little to my talent, to avoid the risk of being wearisome. My reading lasted two days. The approval of my audience made this necessary; and yet, while some readers pass over part of their volume, and make a merit of passing it over, I pass over nothing, and tell my hearers as much. I read everything, because I want to correct everything,—a thing which those who read extracts only cannot do. The other plan, you may say, is more modest, and possibly more respectful. Well, but this is more honest and more affectionate. Genuine affection is so confident of affection in return, as not to be afraid of wearying a friend. Besides, what benefit do one's companions confer if they assemble only for the sake of pleasing themselves? It is very like indolence, when a man would sooner hear his friend read a book already good, than help to make it good. Doubtless, in your general affection for me, you will want to read as soon as possible this book, which is still 'fermenting.' You shall read it, but after it has passed through my hands again. This was my reason for reading it aloud."

CHAPTER VIII.

COMUM, PLINY'S BIRTHPLACE—HIS LIVELY INTEREST IN ITS WELFARE.

COMUM, as has been said, was in all probability the birthplace of both the elder and the younger Pliny. There is much of direct and indirect evidence to connect them with the place. Tradition is distinctly in favour of it. The numerous allusions which are made to it in the letters, and the fact that our friend had several little villas on the margin of the Lake of Como, seem to point to the same conclusion.

Comum was in that northern part of Italy which was known to the Romans as Cisalpine Gaul. It was at the extremity of one of the two southern branches of the Lake of Como, about 28 miles to the north of Milan. It passed out of the hands of the Gauls into the possession of the Romans in B.C. 196, when a great victory, won by the famous Marcellus, the conqueror of Syracuse, over the united strength of the Gauls, carried the Roman territory as far as the foot of the Alps, and made Como and Milan Roman towns. Julius Cæsar added five thousand new colonists to the pop-

ulation of the place, and from that time it became one of the most prosperous towns of the north of Italy. It had several natural advantages. Its beautiful and attractive situation at the foot of the Alps, and on the shores of a lovely lake, was greatly in its favour: it also lay very conveniently in the way of a much-frequented route across the Rhætian Alps. The elder Pliny speaks of its iron-foundries as being the most famous in Italy. Thus it happily combined the various elements which make up the prosperity of a provincial town.

Pliny often in his letters alludes to the picturesque Lake of Como, and seems to have taken peculiar delight in its scenery. He calls it once or twice "our Larius," the name by which Virgil mentions it. One may fairly infer that he would hardly have spoken of it in this manner, had not he and his family been long and closely connected with the neighbourhood. Many a rich Roman had his villa on its banks, which, as they rose in a somewhat steep ascent from the water, were clothed with olive-woods, vineyards, and chestnut-groves. The lower slopes presented to the eye an abundance of rural wealth, and the quiet beauty which is always its accompaniment; above, at no great distance, were all the wildness and grandeur of mountain scenery.

There are some pleasing touches in the following letter, written, as it would appear, to a fellow-townsman of Pliny, who is encouraged to use so delightful a retreat as Comum as a stimulus to literary work:—

PLINY TO CANINIUS RUFUS.*

"How is our dear darling Comum looking? Tell me about that lovely villa, about the colonnade where it is always spring, about the shady plane-tree walk, about the green and flowery banks of that little stream, and of the charming lake below, which serves at once the purpose of use and beauty. What have you to tell me about the carriage-drive, as firm as it is soft, and the sunny bath-room, and your dining-rooms, both for a large and a select circle of friends, and your various chambers of rest and repose by day or night? Do these delightful attractions share you by turns, or are you, as usual, called away from them by the pressure of important business engagements connected with your property? If all these delights have you to themselves, you are indeed most fortunate; if not, you are like most other people. Why not leave (for it is high time) these wretched degrading cares to others, and give yourself up in the deep repose of such a snug retreat to reading and study? Make these your business and your recreation, your labour and your rest, the subjects of your waking and even of your sleeping thoughts. Work at something and produce something which will be yours for ever. All your other possessions will pass from one master to another; this alone, when once yours, will be yours for ever. I know the temper and the genius which I am seeking to stimulate. Only strive to think yourself what the

* Epist. i. 3.

world will think you, if you do yourself justice.—Farewell."

The lively interest which Pliny took in his native place is pleasantly attested by the following letter :—

PLINY TO ANNIUS SEVERUS.*

"Out of a legacy that was left me I have just bought a statue of Corinthian bronze. It is small, but thoroughly clever and done to the life—at least, in my judgment, which, in matters of this sort, and perhaps of every sort, is not worth much. However, I really do see the merits of this statue. It is a nude figure, and its faults, if it has any, are as clearly observable as its beauties. It represents an old man standing up. The bones, the muscles, the veins, and the very wrinkles, all look like life. The hair is thin, the forehead broad, the face shrunken, the throat lank, the arms hang down feebly, the chest is fallen in, and the belly sunk. Looked at from behind, the figure is just as expressive of old age. The bronze, to judge from its colour, has the marks of great antiquity. In short, it is in all respects a work which would strike the eye of a connoisseur, and which cannot fail to charm an ordinary observer. This induced me, novice as I am in such matters, to buy it. However, I bought it not to put in my own house (for I have never had there a Corinthian bronze), but with the intention of placing it in some conspicuous situation in the place of my birth, perhaps in the temple of Jupiter, which has the best claim to it. It is a gift well worthy of a temple

* Epist. iii. 6.

and of a god. Do you, with that kind attention which you always give to my requests, undertake this matter, and order a pedestal to be made for it out of any marble you please, and let my name, and, if you think fit, my various titles, be engraven upon it. I will send you the statue by the first person who will not object to the trouble; or, what I am sure you will like better, I will bring it myself, for I intend, if I can get away from business, to take a run into your parts. I see joy in your looks when I promise to come; but your joy will soon go when I tell you that my visit will be only for a few days, for the work which keeps me here will prevent my making a longer stay.—Farewell."

The two following letters will show that Pliny's anxiety for the welfare of his native town took a much higher range than that of a simply graceful act of liberality. He did his best to make provision for the enlightenment of the inhabitants, by presenting them with a library and helping them to establish a school. It appears that on the first occasion he made a speech to the burgesses of Comum, in which he no doubt dwelt on the pleasure and advantages of intellectual culture; and in the following letter he explains the motives which prompted him to this particular act of munificence. He mentions in it an interesting circumstance, which has about it a singularly modern character. In the spirit of the benevolent patron, he has established a fund for the maintenance and education of the children of distressed gentlefolks:—

PLINY TO POMPEIUS SATURNINUS.*

"Nothing could have been more seasonable than the letter in which you begged me to send you some of my literary efforts, as at the time I had intended to do so. You have, in fact, put spurs into the willing horse, and saved yourself the excuse of refusing the trouble, and me the awkwardness of asking the favour. Without any hesitation, then, I avail myself of your offer, and you must now take the consequences of it without reluctance. But don't expect anything new from such a lazy man as myself. I am going to ask you to revise once more the speech I made to my fellow-townsmen when I dedicated the public library to their use. I remember that you have already given me a few general criticisms, but I now beg of you not only to take a general view of the whole speech, but to criticise it in detail. When you have done this, I shall still be at liberty to publish or to keep it back. And perhaps my doubtfulness in the matter will be determined one way or the other as the process of correction goes on; for careful revision will either show it to be not worth publishing, or will make it fit to be published. Yet my chief difficulty in deciding arises not so much from the character of the composition as from its subject-matter. The style may be ever so plain and unpretentious, yet it is embarrassing to modesty to have to speak not only of my ancestors' munificence, but also of my own. It is a dangerous and slippery situation, though necessity draws one into it. People do not

* Epist. i. 7.

listen very patiently to the praise which we bestow on others; how difficult, then, must it be to get a favourable hearing when we have to talk about ourselves or our ancestors! Virtue by itself is apt to be disliked—especially so, when glory and distinction attend it; and the world is never so little likely to misrepresent or to carp at good actions, as when they pass unobserved and without applause. Hence I have often asked myself, Is this composition, whatever its merits, due to my own vanity or to regard for others? I see that many things which may be quite proper and necessary at a particular time, lose all their usefulness and grace when the occasion is past. In the case before us, what could have been more useful than to explain at length the grounds and motives of my liberality? First, it engaged my mind in good and ennobling thoughts; it made me take a lengthened survey of the nobleness of such thoughts; then, it effectually guarded me from that repentance which is sure to follow on an impulsive act of generosity. All this trained me to the habit of despising mere wealth. I find that all men naturally like to keep what they have got; for myself, a love of liberality has been the result of long and matured reflection, and has set me free from that slavery to avarice which is so common in the world. My bounty, I thought, would be the more praiseworthy, as it would be recognised as the result of deliberate purpose and not of sudden impulse. Add to all this, that what I engaged to do was not to exhibit games or a gladiatorial show, but to establish an annual fund for the maintenance and education of poor people of respectable family.

Pleasures which merely appeal to the eye and the ear, so far from wanting a speech to recommend them, often need to be discouraged by eloquent argument; whereas, if you can induce a man to undertake the tiresome work of education, you must attract him not only by pay, but also by the most seductive allurements of a persuasive rhetoric. If physicians find that they must coax their patients into adopting a wholesome though perhaps unpleasant regimen, how much more ought a man who, out of regard to the public welfare, has to recommend a highly useful but not very popular benefaction, to win the people over by persuasiveness of argument, especially when, like myself, he has to plead for an institution solely for the benefit of those who are parents, and to do his best to persuade a large number who are yet childless to wait patiently for a privilege in which only a few can immediately share? As, however, at the time I thought of the public good more than of my own personal reputation, and with that view explained my motives, so now I am afraid that if I publish my speech, people will say that I do it for my own credit rather than for the good of others. Persons who confer public benefits, and then afterwards set them off in speeches, seem to have conferred them simply in order to talk about them. In my own case, a special circumstance weighs much with me. My speech was not delivered before an assembly of all the people of the town, but only before the corporation in the town-hall. I fear it would hardly be consistent in me, after having avoided popular applause when I made the speech, to appear now to covet the same applause by

publishing it, and, though I thus kept out of the town-hall the mass of the people for whose benefit the library was given, to be afterwards thrusting a parade of my liberality on those to whom it can do no good except by way of example. Such are my reasons for hesitating in this matter. Your judgment, which I shall esteem a sufficient sanction for my conduct, will decide me.—Farewell."

Still more interesting, because simpler and less self-conscious, is the following letter, in which he describes his offer to his townspeople to contribute largely to the establishment of a school for their youth:—

PLINY TO TACITUS.*

"I am glad to hear of your safe arrival at Rome. I am always anxious to see you, and especially just now. I shall stay a few more days at Tusculum, that I may finish a little work I have in hand; for I am afraid that if I break it off when I have all but completed it, I shall find it difficult to take it up again. Meanwhile, that I may lose no time, I send off this letter, so to speak, in advance of me, to ask a favour of you which I shall soon ask in person. First, let me tell you the occasion of it. Being lately at my native town, a young lad, son of one of my neighbours, came to pay me a complimentary call. 'Do you go to school?' I asked him. 'Yes,' he replied. 'Where?' 'At Mediolanum.'† 'Why not here?' 'Because,' said his father, who had come with him, 'we have no professors here.'

* Epist. iv. 17. † Milan.

'No professors! Why, surely,' I replied, 'it would be very much to the interest of all you fathers' (and, fortunately, several fathers heard what I said) 'to have your sons educated here rather than anywhere else. Where can they live more pleasantly than in their own town? or be bred up more virtuously than under their parents' eyes, or at less expense than at home? What an easy matter it would be, by a general contribution, to hire teachers, and to apply to their salaries the money which you now spend on lodging, journeys, and all you have to purchase for your sons at a distance from home. I have no children myself; I look on my native town in the light of a child or a parent, and I am ready to advance a third part of any sum which you think fit to raise for the purpose. I would even promise the whole amount, were I not afraid that my benefaction might be spoilt by jobbery, as I see happens in many towns where teachers are engaged at the public expense. There is only one way of meeting this evil. If the choice of professors is left solely to the parents, the obligation to choose rightly will be enforced by the necessity of having to pay towards the professors' salaries. Those who would perhaps be careless in administering another's bounty, will certainly be careful about their own expenses, and will see that none but those who deserve it receive any money, when they must at the same time receive theirs as well. So take counsel together, and be encouraged by my example, and be assured that the greater my proportion of the expense shall be, the better shall I be pleased. You can do nothing more for the good of

your children, or more acceptable to your native town. Your sons will thus receive their education in the place of their birth, and be accustomed from their infancy to love and to cling to their native soil. I trust that you may secure such eminent teachers that the neighbouring towns will be glad to draw their learning from hence; so that, as you now send your children elsewhere to be educated, other people's children may hereafter flock hither for instruction.'

"I thought it advisable to explain the whole affair to you circumstantially, that you may see more clearly how much obliged I should be if you will undertake what I request. I entreat you, in consideration of the importance of the matter, to look out among the multitude of men of letters whom the reputation of your genius draws round you, some teachers to whom we may apply, but without as yet tying ourselves down to any particular man. I leave everything to the parents; I wish them to judge, and select as they think fit; I take on myself nothing but the trouble and expense. If any one shall be found who has confidence in his own ability, let him go there; but he must understand that he goes with no assurance but that derived from his own merit."

There is an inscription at Como in honour of a grammarian named Septicianus, which seems to imply that Pliny's proposal to the townspeople was accepted, and bore fruit.

CHAPTER IX.

PLINY'S FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

It is not too much to say that the glimpses which we get of Pliny's domestic life—of the man as he lived among his family and friends—make as pleasant a picture as anything of the kind that is to be found in classical literature. There are letters, indeed, of Cicero which are full of the same kind of interest; but, unhappily, we know too much about Cicero. It is impossible, for instance, as we read the affectionate language which he addresses to his wife Terentia, to help recollecting that in later life he divorced this same Terentia, and married a ward of his own; and the recollection, though it need not make us doubt the sincerity of his language, cannot but diminish the pleasure with which we regard the writer in this aspect of his life. It might, of course, be objected, that it is well for Pliny's character, and for our own satisfaction, that we know far less about him; but it is a fact that all that we do know is of the pleasantest kind. There is not a syllable in what he says about his wife, his kindred, his friends, that we could wish to be changed;

not a syllable that hints at his being other than an affectionate, just, blameless man. Nor is there from other sources a breath of scandal against his name. One is apt to think, after reading such terrible books as Suetonius's 'Lives of the Cæsars' and Juvenal's Satires, that there could not have been such a thing as pure and happy family-life in Rome; and it is refreshing to correct such an impression by turning to the picture that we get in these letters, and to feel assured that, in the darkest and worst times, there were homes such as we know our English homes to be, kind masters whose hearts the curse of slavery had not hardened, single-minded friends, pure women, and faithful husbands. Of Pliny's father we know absolutely nothing. His mother appears once only—in the letters describing the eruption of Vesuvius—though she is not unfrequently alluded to. What we read there is enough to satisfy us that there was a strong affection between the mother and the son. We also learn that she was somewhat infirm, and we may gather from his language here and elsewhere that she was not alive at the time (97-107) to which the Letters are to be ascribed. That Pliny had married some time previous to the year A.D. 96, we learn from the fact that he then held a sacred office which involved marriage, and from his own statement, that that year—the year, it will be remembered, of the accession of Nerva—found him suffering from a recent bereavement in the loss of his wife. He makes no other mention of this lady. We do not even know her name. His second wife, Calpurnia, is comparatively well known to us. We

cannot do better than let the reader see the letter,* written, it would seem, not long after marriage, in which he describes her good qualities to her aunt, Calpurnia Hispulla, herself an old friend of the Pliny family, who had had the charge of her education :—

"It is because you are a model of family affections, because you loved, as well as he loved you, that most excellent and affectionate brother of yours, and still love his daughter, showing to her the affection not only of an aunt, but also of her dead father, I am sure that you will feel the greatest joy in knowing that she is proving herself worthy of her father, worthy of you, worthy of her grandfather. Her intelligence is very great, very great her frugality ; in loving me she shows how good a heart she has. And she has now a fondness for letters which springs from her affection for me. She keeps my books by her, loves to read them, even learns them by heart. How anxious she is when she sees that I am going to speak, how delighted when I have spoken ! She takes care to have messengers to let her know how far I have convinced, how often moved my audience to applaud, and what has been the result of the trial. If ever I give a reading, she sits close by, separated from the audience by a curtain, and drinks in my praises with the greediest ears. She sings and sets to the harp my verses ; and it is not any professor who teaches her, but love, who is the best of masters. These things make me feel a most certain hope that there will be a perpetual and ever-growing harmony between us. For it is not youth or

* Epist. iv. 19.

personal beauty that she loves in me—things that by degrees decline with old age—but my fame. This is exactly what becomes one brought up by your hands, and instructed by your teaching—one who can never have seen anything in your companionship but what was pure and honourable, and who learnt to love me from your descriptions. It was you, you who used to look upon my mother as upon a parent, you who trained me from early boyhood, you who praised me, you who predicted that I should be the man that now I appear to be. So we vie with each other in thanking you—I for your having given her to me, she for your having given me to her; for we seem each to have chosen the other."

To Calpurnia herself we find addressed three charming love-letters* from her husband, which we shall not apologise for giving entire :—

"I have never complained more than now of my occupations, which did not allow me to accompany you when you were going into Campania to recruit your health, or even to be quick in following you. I am at this time especially anxious to be with you, to learn from my own eyes whether you are growing stronger and stouter, and whether you make your way through these luxurious and pleasure-seeking regions without meeting anything to annoy you. Were you quite well, I could not have you away from me without some apprehension. There is a certain fear and anxiety in knowing nothing for a time about her whom one loves most ardently. As it is, when I consider both my own absence

* Epist. vi. 4; vi. 7; vii. 5.

and your feeble health, I am grievously troubled by vague and various anxieties. I dread everything, fancy everything, and, as is natural to those who fear, conjure up the very things that I most dread. I entreat you, therefore, the more earnestly, to do what you can for my fears, by writing once, nay, even twice, a-day. I shall be more at ease while I am reading your letters, though when I have read them, I shall immediately feel my fears again."

"You write that you are no little troubled by my absence, and find your only solace in making my books take my place, and setting them where I ought to be. I am glad that you miss me; I am glad that you find some rest in these alleviations. For my part, I read and re-read your letters, taking them up in my hands many times, as though they were newly come; but this only stirs in me a keener longing for you. What sweetness must there be in the talk of one whose letters contain so much that pleases! Write, nevertheless, as often as you can, though this, while it delights, still tortures me."

"You will not believe what a longing for you possesses me. The chief cause of this is my love; and then we have not grown used to be apart. So it comes to pass that I spend a great part of the night in a wakefulness that dwells on your image; and that by day, when the hours return at which I was wont to visit you, my feet take me, as is so truly said, to your chamber; and that at last, sick and sad at heart, like a

lover whom his mistress shuts out, I depart from the empty threshold. The only time that is free from these torments is when I am being worn out by the business of the courts and the suits of my friends. Judge you what must be my life when I find my repose in toil, my solace in wretchedness and anxiety."

This wife Pliny nearly lost by a dangerous illness, brought on by a miscarriage. She seems, however, to have recovered her health, for she was with him during his two years' stay in his provincial government. It was apparently about the end of that period when she was summoned to Italy by the death of her grandfather. Pliny, in one of his letters to the Emperor, excuses himself for having given his wife a *diploma* (a sort of free pass, entitling the bearer to use horses and carriages belonging to the state). He had never before, he says, given one except on the Emperor's affairs; but his wife had heard of the death of her grandfather, and wished to make all haste she could to join her aunt (the Calpurnia Hispulla before mentioned), and he had given her the document without waiting for the Emperor's sanction, which, indeed, could not have been given till it was too late to be of use. Trajan's answer is, as we should expect, kind and approving.

It would seem that Pliny had no children—that is, if we may argue from the absence of any allusion of the kind in the Letters, except, indeed, when he writes to Calpurnia's aunt and to her grandfather about the disappointment which he and his wife had experienced. "You cannot desire" (he writes to the old

man, his father-in-law's father, or *prosocer*, as the Latin conveniently expresses it) "great-grandchildren more eagerly than I desire children—children to whom I seem likely to leave an easy road to honour, both on your side and on mine—a name that is widely known, and a nobility of no new origin. The gods grant that they may be born, and change this sorrow of ours into joy." We should hardly have failed to hear if their hopes had been fulfilled. Childlessness was common, as we may gather from many indications, among the upper class of Romans.

Calpurnia's father had died many years before her marriage. Her grandfather, Calpurnius Fabatus, survived, as we have seen, to the year 105. He must have been then a very old man, as more than forty years before, in the days of Nero, he had had a narrow escape from a charge brought against him by one of the informers of the time. He was, it appears, a native, or, at all events, an inhabitant of Comum, and therefore a fellow-townsman of Pliny. We also find that he was a man of wealth. We have a letter congratulating him on having dedicated, in the name of himself and of his son (who was then dead), a very handsome chapel in Comum, and in having promised a further sum of money for the ornamentation of the gates. In another letter Pliny sends his compliments to the old man on the occasion of his birthday, and takes the opportunity of telling him that he had inspected a villa of his in Campania. A third letter, written, like the others, in a very affectionate tone, promises an early visit on the part of Pliny and

his wife. This letter will be found at the close of the next chapter.

The subject of Pliny's family must not be dismissed without a brief mention of the humbler members of it, the freedmen and slaves, for whom he seems to have entertained a kindly feeling which was not always found in Roman masters, and which he does not describe without something of apology in his tone. "I know," he says, writing to a friend, "how mildly you rule your household, and so will more frankly confess to you how indulgently I treat my own people." These words are the introduction to a letter which he writes on behalf of his freedman, Zosimus. Zosimus, who was of Greek extraction—descended, one may guess, through more than one generation of slaves, from the inhabitant of some luckless Greek city which had taken the wrong side in the civil wars—was an accomplished man, with a special gift for comic acting. He had suffered from hemorrhage, brought on by the exercise of his art, and had been sent by his master, or, we should rather say, patron, into Egypt. From this country he had returned apparently restored in health, but exertion had brought on a partial relapse. Pliny writes to his friend Paullinus to request that the invalid might be allowed to take up his abode for a time on an estate which the latter possessed at Forum Julii (now Fréjus, in the Riviera). It is interesting to see the Roman using the same *sanatoria* as are now in request among consumptive patients. Another noteworthy point is an arrangement which the letter suggests, almost as a matter of course, by which Zosi-

mus was to be quartered at the expense of Paullinus or his tenants. "Will you," it runs, "give direction to your people to let him have the use of your house and buildings, and to furnish him with supplies if he wants anything. A physician he certainly will want. I will give him, when he sets out, a sum for travelling expenses sufficient to carry him to your place."

Another letter speaks so well for the writer's kindness of heart, that we shall give it entire.*

"I am much troubled by illnesses, and, alas! by deaths, among my own people, some of them quite young men. I have two consolations, not equal indeed to so great a sorrow, yet consolations still. One is my willingness to give them their freedom. I count myself to have lost, not altogether before their time, those who were free when I lost them. The other is, that I allow even my slaves to make what may be called wills, and that I treat them as valid. They leave such injunctions and requests as they think fit; I obey as one who follows command. They share, they give, they leave what they possess, so long as they do it within the family.† To the slave, indeed, the family is a sort of commonwealth, so to speak, or country. Though I seek to be satisfied with these consolations, still I am overcome; I am overpowered by the same human feeling which has led me to grant this indulgence, yet I would not wish to become harder. I know, indeed, that others speak of misfortunes of this kind as being nothing

* Epist. viii. 16.

† The "family," in Roman parlance, included the whole household, bond or free.

more than a loss of property, and think themselves, on the strength of it, great and wise men. Great and wise they may be—I cannot tell; but *men* they are not. To be touched by grief—to feel it, but fight against it; to make use of consolations, not to be above the need of them—this is what becomes a man."

Pliny's FRIENDS were a numerous company, and it must suffice to notice a few of the most prominent. Of the men of letters we have already spoken. Among the rest, VERGINIUS RUFUS, who had acted as joint guardian with his uncle, stands foremost.

His name occurs several times in the History of Tacitus. His life was long and eventful. During the last year of Nero's reign he commanded the Roman army in Lower Germany, and in the confusion which followed on the revolt of Vindex, the soldiers wished to make him emperor. He refused, on the ground that it was for the senate and not for the army to name Nero's successor. Soon after, on Otho's death, the same offer was pressed on him by the soldiers, and a second time declined. This brought him into peril; the capricious soldiery, in their disappointment, accused him of a conspiracy against Vitellius, and insisted on his being put to death. The danger was happily escaped, and this great man lived to A.D. 97, the second year of Nero's reign, and died as consul for the third time at the age of eighty-three. We have in the following letter* an account of the circumstances of his death and of his funeral:—

* Epist. ii. 1.

PLINY TO VOCONIUS ROMANUS.

"Rome has not for many years beheld a grander and more memorable sight than the public funeral of Verginius Rufus, a most illustrious man, and as fortunate as he was illustrious. He lived thirty years after he had reached the zenith of his fame. He read poems about himself, and histories of his achievements; he, in fact, lived to see his fame with an after-generation. He was three times consul, thus rising to be the highest of subjects, after having refused to be an emperor. The Cæsars, who suspected and hated his virtues, he outlived, and has left behind him this best of emperors, this friend of all mankind. One would think Providence had spared him that he might receive the honour of a public funeral. He died in his eighty-fourth year, in the most perfect calm, reverenced by all. He had enjoyed strong health, with the exception of a trembling in his hands, which, however, gave him no pain. His last illness, indeed, was severe and tedious, but its circumstances added to his reputation. He was one day practising his voice with the view of delivering a speech of thanks to the Emperor for having promoted him to the consulship, and had taken in his hand a large volume, which was rather too heavy for an old man to hold as he stood up. It slipped from his grasp, and in hastily trying to recover it, his foot slipped on the smooth pavement; he fell and broke his thigh-bone, which, being badly set (his age being against him), did not properly unite. His funeral obsequies have done honour to the Emperor, to the age, and to the bar.

Cornelius Tacitus, as consul, pronounced over him the funeral oration. His good fortune was crowned by having so eloquent a speaker to celebrate his praises. He died, indeed, full of years and of glory, famous even from honours which he had refused. Still our world must always sadly miss him, as an example of a past age; and for myself, I must peculiarly feel his loss, for I not only admired him as a patriot, but loved him as a friend. We came from the same part, and from neighbouring towns, and our estates joined each other. Besides all this, he was left my guardian, and treated me with a parent's affection. Whenever I was a candidate for office he supported me with his interest, and though he had long since given up all such services to friends, he would leave his retirement and give me his vote in person. On the day on which the priests nominate such as they think most worthy of the sacred office, he always proposed me. Even in his last illness, when he thought he might possibly be appointed by the senate one of the five commissioners for reducing the public expenses, he fixed upon me, young as I was, to make his excuses, in preference to many other friends of superior age and rank. He even said to me, 'Had I a son of my own I would intrust you with this matter.'

"And so I must lament his death, as though it were premature, and pour out my grief into your bosom, if indeed it is right to lament over him, or to use the word death of an event which to such a man terminates his mortality rather than ends his life. He lives, and will live for ever, and his name will be more

widely celebrated in the recollection of posterity now that he is taken from our sight. I had much else to write to you, but my mind is wholly absorbed in these thoughts. Verginius is ever present to my imagination, and even to my eyes. I am ever fondly imagining that I hear him, converse with him, embrace him. We have perhaps, and still shall have, citizens equal to him in virtue; none, I feel sure, in renown.—Farewell."

Next to Verginius Rufus comes another soldier, VESTRICIUS SPURINNA. Spurinna had made his reputation in the wars of a former generation, when he distinguished himself by his brilliant defence of Placentia, which he held in the interest of Otho against the Vitellianist general Cæcina. It was nearly thirty years after this that Trajan, a prince not likely to choose for such service a commander who had lost anything of his vigour, put him in command of an army that was intended to operate against the Bructeri, a German tribe. The object of the campaign, which was to restore a native prince, was effected without recourse to actual hostilities. A statue, habited in the robe of triumph, was voted to Spurinna by the senate, and a similar honour was paid to his son, whom he had lost while absent from Rome. Of this son Pliny wrote a memoir, which we find him sending, with a graceful letter of condolence, to the father and mother. There is another letter addressed by Pliny to Spurinna, in which he tells him how Calpurnius Piso, grandson probably of the luckless man whom Galba adopted three days before

his death, had acquitted himself in writing some poem. "I write the more speedily," he says, "because I know how well disposed you are to all honourable pursuits, and how it delights you to find young men of noble race doing something worthy of their ancestors." The aged general was indeed an accomplished and cultivated man; nor would it be easy to find in literature a more pleasant picture than Pliny, who had just returned from a visit to his old friend, gives of his life in retirement.*

[We take the translation of Dean Merivale, in his 'History of the Romans under the Empire,' vol. vii. p. 326, 327.]

"I know not that I ever passed a pleasanter time than lately with Spurinna. There is indeed no man I should so much wish to resemble in my own old age, if I am permitted to grow old. Nothing can be finer than such a mode of life. For my part I like a well-ordered course of life, particularly in old men, just as I admire the regular order of the stars. Some amount of irregularity, and even of confusion, is not unbecoming in youth; but everything should be regular and methodical with old men, who are too late for labour, and in whom ambition would be indecent. This regularity Spurinna strictly observes, and his occupations, trifling as they are (trifling, that is, were they not performed day by day continually), he repeats as it were in a circle. At dawn he keeps his bed, at seven he asks for his slippers; he then walks just three miles, exercising his mind at the same time with his limbs.

* Epist. iii. 1.

If friends are by, he discourses seriously with them—if not, he hears a book read; and so he sometimes does even when friends are present, if it be not disagreeable to them. He then seats himself, and more reading follows, or more conversation, which he likes better. By-and-by he mounts his carriage, taking with him his wife, a most admirable woman, or some friends—as myself, for instance, the other day. What a noble, what a charming *tête-à-tête!*—how much talk of ancient things! what deeds, what men you hear of! what noble precepts you imbibe, though indeed he refrains from all appearance of teaching! Returning from a seven-mile drive, he walks again one mile; then sits down or reclines with a pen in his hand, for he composes lyrical pieces with elegance both in Greek and Latin. Very soft, sweet, and merry they are, and their charm is enhanced by the decorum of the author's own habits. When the hour of the bath is announced—that is, at two in summer, at three in winter—he strips and takes a turn in the sun, if there is no wind. Then he uses strong exercise for a considerable space at tennis, for this is the discipline with which he struggles against old age. After the bath he takes his place at table, but puts off eating for a time, listening in the meanwhile to a little light and pleasant reading. All this time his friends are free to do as he does, or anything else they please. Dinner is then served, elegant and moderate, on plain but ancient silver. He uses Corinthian bronzes, too, and admires without being foolishly addicted to them. Players are often introduced between the courses, that

the pleasures of the mind may give a relish to those of the palate. He trenches a little on the night even in summer; but no one finds the time tire, such are his kindness and urbanity throughout. Hence now, at the age of seventy-seven, he both hears and sees perfectly; hence his frame is active and vigorous; he has nothing but old age to remind him to take care of himself. Such is the mode of life to which I look forward for myself, and on which I will enter with delight as soon as advancing years allow me to effect a retreat. Meanwhile I am harassed by a thousand troubles, in which Spurinna is my consolation, as he has ever been my example. For he, too, as long as it became him, discharged duties, bore offices, governed provinces; and great was the labour by which he earned his relaxation."

Another among the older friends of Pliny was CORELLIUS RUFUS. One of the earliest of the letters describes his death; others speak in affectionate terms of the intimate friendship which, in spite of the disparity of age, had always existed between the two, and of the great services which the elder had rendered to the younger friend. "Our age," says Pliny, writing to a friend who had asked him to plead the cause of Corellius's daughter, "has seen no nobler man, none of purer life, none of keener intellect. He was one whom, when my admiration for him grew into affection, I admired the more, the more thoroughly I knew him—scarcely, you know, what usually happens." Throughout his public life, in seeking office and in discharging its duties, Corellius had always been at his side. "The conversation," he writes, "once happened to

turn in Nerva's presence on young men of worth. Many were speaking in high praise of me; for a while he kept the silence which helped to give such weight to his words. At last, with that serious air which you know, he said, 'I must be moderate in praising Secundus, for he never acts but by my advice.'" The circumstances of his death were peculiarly painful. We quote the letter * in which Pliny describes them, and again avail ourselves of Dean Merivale's translation of the passage:—

"I have just suffered a great loss. My friend Corellius Rufus is dead, and by his own act, which imbitters my sorrow. No death is so much to be lamented as one that comes not in the course of fate or nature. Corellius indeed was led to this resolve by the force of reason, which holds with philosophers the place of necessity, although he had many motives for living—a good conscience, a high reputation and influence, not to mention a daughter, a wife, a grandson, sisters, and true friends besides. But he was tortured by so protracted a malady that his reasons for death outweighed all these advantages. In his thirty-third year, as I have heard him declare, he was attacked by gout in his feet.† The disease was hereditary with him. In the vigour of life he had checked it by sobriety and restraint; when it grew worse with increasing years, he had borne it with fortitude and patience. I visited him one day, in

* Epist. i. 12.

† We have here taken the liberty of altering Dean Merivale's rendering.

Domitian's time, and found him in the greatest suffering, for the disease had spread from the feet all through his limbs. His slaves quitted the room, for such was their habit whenever an intimate friend came to see him; and such was also his wife's practice, though she could have kept any secret. After casting his eyes around, he said, 'Why do you suppose it is I continue so long to endure these torments? I would survive the ruffian (meaning Domitian) just one day.' Had his body been as strong as his mind, this wish he would have effected with his own hand. God granted it, however; and when he felt that he should die a free man, he burst through all the lesser ties which bound him to life. The malady which he had tried so long to relieve by temperance still increased. At last his firmness gave way. Two, three, four days passed, and he had refused all food. His wife, Hispulla, sent our friend Geminius to me, with the melancholy news that her husband had resolved to die, and would not be dissuaded by her prayers or her daughter's; I alone could prevail upon him. I flew to him. I had almost reached the spot, when Atticus met me from Hispulla to say that even I could not now prevail, so fixed had become his determination. To his physician, indeed, on food being offered him, he had said, 'I have decided;' an expression which makes me the more regret him, as I the more admire him. I think to myself, What a friend, what a man I have lost! He had completed, indeed, his sixty-seventh year, an advanced age even for the strongest. Yes, I know it. He has escaped from his long-

protracted illness. I know it. He has died, leaving his dearest friends behind him, and the state, which was still dearer to him, in prosperity. This, too, I know. Nevertheless I lament his death, no less than if he were young and vigorous. I lament it—do not think me weak in saying so—on my own account. For I have lost—yes, I have lost a witness of my own life, a guide, a master. In short, I will say to you, as I said to my friend Calvisius, I fear I shall myself live more carelessly for the future."

Another of his friends was JUNIUS MAURICUS, the brother of Arulenus Rusticus, who, as Tacitus tells us at the beginning of his Life of Agricola, had been put to death under Domitian for writing a panegyric on Pætus Thrasea. "We," says the historian, speaking of his brother senators in one of the closing chapters, in which he briefly and powerfully sketches the last three terrible years of Domitian's reign,—"we parted the two brothers;" the one being murdered, the other driven into exile. The banishment of Mauricus is alluded to in a letter already given about the informer Regulus.* He returned from exile in the year of Nerva's accession; and though only three of Pliny's extant letters are addressed to him, he was, it is clear, one of his intimate and valued friends. From one of these letters it appears that he had asked Pliny to look out for a husband for his brother's daughter; another is a reply to the request that he would choose a tutor for his brother's children. In these letters Pliny implies that he himself owed much to the brother, who was

P. 52.

one of the many victims of the reign of terror, and that he was prepared to undertake the somewhat invidious task of making a selection. Pliny says he never knew a firmer or a more outspoken man than Mauricus. The praise would seem to have been well deserved. Tacitus tells us that he put a singularly bold question to Domitian on the occasion of his father's accession to the throne. It was Domitian's first appearance in the senate, and Mauricus then and there publicly asked him to submit to the House the papers of the late emperors, so that they might see for themselves who had laid informations, and who were the subjects of those informations. The Emperor, Domitian replied, must be consulted in so important a matter; and the motion was thus evaded. We have already had occasion to allude to an instance of the truthfulness and candour of Mauricus when he was once dining with the Emperor Nerva. Pliny mentions another. There was a celebration of games, with the usual gymnastic contests, at Vienna, in Gaul, which one of Pliny's friends, who held an important office in the town, contrived to get abolished. It was said that he had done this without the authority of the townspeople; and when brought to trial, as it would appear, before the senate, he pleaded his cause himself, and carried with him the sympathies of the audience. When the verdict had to be pronounced, and it came to the turn of Mauricus to pronounce judgment, he gave it as his opinion that the games in question ought not to be repeated at Vienna; and he added the audacious and unpopular sentiment that he wished they could be abolished at Rome.

Several of Pliny's letters are addressed to VOCONIUS ROMANUS. We know nothing of him but what Pliny tells us. He was evidently one of his best and dearest friends. His father was a Roman knight, and his mother came from one of the provinces of Spain. Pliny and he had been fellow-students; they had, no doubt, heard the same lectures at Rome, and had acquired similar tastes. Voconius was preparing himself for the bar, and became, according to Pliny, an admirable pleader. He is spoken of in the highest terms in a letter in which Pliny recommends him to the notice of Priscus, who was, it appears, in the command of a large army, and would have plenty of patronage at his disposal. Pliny says of him, "My friend is a charming talker, and has, besides, a particularly sweet expression of countenance. He has, too, ability of the highest order; he has a piercing and refined intellect, ready for its work at a moment's notice; he is a learned lawyer; he writes such admirable letters that you would think the Muses themselves must speak in Latin. I love him as much as it is possible for one friend to love another, and his love for me is the same." Pliny asks for his friend a great favour of the Emperor Trajan, which we may presume was granted. He begs that he may be raised to the highest rank in the state, and be made a senator.

A singularly pathetic letter—it happens, naturally enough, that we hear most of the friends whom Pliny lost—describes the character of a younger man, Junius Avitus, to whom Pliny had rendered much the same service that he had himself received from Corellius Rufus;

and who, after having won golden opinions both in a short military career and as prætor under more than one provincial governor, had died suddenly, immediately after completing his canvass for the ædileship. But of all the letters of the kind, there is nothing more touching than the following: *—

"I have the saddest news to tell you. Our friend Fundanus has lost his younger daughter. I never saw a girl more cheerful, more lovable, more worthy of long life—nay, of immortality. She had not yet completed her fourteenth year, and she had already the prudence of an old woman, the gravity of a matron, and still, with all maidenly modesty, the sweetness of a girl. How she would cling to her father's neck! how affectionately and discreetly she would greet us, her father's friends! how she loved her nurses, her attendants, her teachers,—every one according to his service! How earnestly, how intelligently, she used to read! How modest was she and restrained in her sports! And with what self-restraint, what patience—nay, what courage—she bore her last illness! She obeyed the physicians, encouraged her father and sister, and when all strength of body had left her, kept herself alive by the vigour of her mind. This vigour lasted to the very end, and was not broken by the length of her illness or by the fear of death; so leaving, alas! to us yet more and weightier reasons for our grief and our regret. Oh the sadness, the bitterness of that death! Oh the cruelty of the time when we lost her, worse even than

* Epist. v. 16.

the loss itself! She had been betrothed to a noble youth; the marriage-day had been fixed, and we had been invited. How great a joy changed into how great a sorrow! I cannot express in words how it went to my heart when I heard Fundanus himself (this is one of the grievous experiences of sorrow) giving orders that what he had meant to lay out on dresses, and pearls, and jewels, should be spent on incense, unguents, and spices."

CHAPTER X.

COUNTRY LIFE—PLINY'S VILLAS.

PLINY, like all the rich men of his time, lived much in the country. He thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated the charms of rural scenery, and his descriptions of it have about them the tone of modern sentiment. As we read them, we seem to be on the threshold of our own times. There is, we feel, a distinct link between our own tastes and those of a Roman who could dwell with pleasure on the beauties of a landscape. The Roman of the upper class, no doubt, had always been fond of country life, and was in many respects not unlike an English squire; but it would seem that the sort of sentimental, and, so to speak, artistic feeling about the country which is so familiar to us, was specially developed under the Empire, and exhibited itself in the literature of the Silver age.

In the following letter Pliny contrasts life in Rome with life in the country:—

PLINY TO MINUTIUS FUNDANUS.*

"When one considers how the time passes at Rome,

* Epist. i. 9.

one cannot but be surprised that, take any single day, and it either is or seems to be spent reasonably enough; and yet, upon casting up the whole sum, the amount will appear quite otherwise. Ask any of your friends what he has been doing to-day? he will tell you, perhaps, 'I have been paying a visit to a friend on the occasion of his son's coming of age; I have had an invitation to a wedding; I have had to witness the signature of a will; I was asked to attend the hearing of a cause; I was called in to a consultation.' All these duties seem very important while you are engaged in them; yet, when you reflect at your leisure that every day has been thus employed, you feel them to be mere trifles. Then you think to yourself how many of your days have been spent in a dull dreary routine. This is my own case when I retire to my house at Laurentum for a little quiet reading and writing, and for the bodily rest which freshens up the mind. Then I hear nothing and say nothing for which I have reason to be sorry; no one talks scandal to me, and I find fault with nobody, except myself, when I cannot compose to my satisfaction. There I am free from the anxieties of hope and fear; no rumours worry me; my books and my thoughts are my only companions. True and genuine life, sweet and honourable repose, nobler than any sort of occupation! O sea and shore, true scene for study and contemplation, with how many thoughts do you inspire me! My friend, do you too take the first opportunity of leaving the bustle of Rome, with its idle pursuits and laborious trifles, and give yourself up to

study or to repose. 'It is better,' as my friend Atilius has said, with as much wit as wisdom, 'to have nothing to do than to be doing nothing.'—Farewell."

Horace complains in very much the same way of a city life, and of the infinite boredom which so often attends it. "As soon as I came," he says, "to the gardens of Mæcenas at Rome, a hundred suitors leap out and pounce upon me, and annoy me with endless solicitations." Some of the very same particular troubles are mentioned by the poet as are alluded to by Pliny.

In the following letter we see the delight which Pliny took in beautiful scenery. It is a description of the source of the Clitumnus and the surrounding country. The Clitumnus was a little river in Umbria, and a tributary of the Tiber. It was known as the Timia or Tinia during the last nine or ten miles of its course. Virgil speaks of the singularly white cattle which were pastured on its banks. It flowed through a rich valley bounded on either side by the Apennines. It would appear that the picturesqueness of the scenery about its source attracted a number of visitors. Clitunno is its modern name; Spoleto and Foligno are in its immediate neighbourhood.

PLINY TO ROMANUS.*

"Have you ever seen the source of the Clitumnus? I suppose not, as I never heard you mention it. Let me advise you to go there at once. I have just seen it, and am sorry I put off my visit so long.

* Epist. iii. 8.

"At the foot of a little hill, covered with old and shady cypress-trees, gushes out a spring, which bursts out into a number of streamlets, all of different sizes. Having struggled, so to speak, out of its confinement, it opens out into a broad basin, so clear and transparent that you may count the pebbles and little pieces of money which are thrown into it. From this point the force and weight of the water, rather than the slope of the ground, hurries it onward. What was a mere fountain becomes a noble river, wide enough to allow vessels to pass each other, as they sail with or against the stream. The current is so strong, though the ground is level, that large barges, as they go down the river, do not require the assistance of oars; while to go up it is as much as can possibly be done with oars and long poles. When you sail up and down for amusement, the ease of going down the stream and the labour of returning make a pleasant variety. The banks are clothed with an abundance of ash and poplar, which are so distinctly reflected in the clear water that they seem to be growing at the bottom of the river, and can be easily counted. The water is as cold as snow, and its colour the same. Near it stands an ancient and venerable temple, in which is a statue of the river-god Clitumnus, clothed in the usual robe of state. The oracles here delivered attest the presence of the deity. In the immediate neighbourhood are several little chapels, dedicated to particular gods, each of whom has his distinctive name and special worship, and is the tutelary deity of a fountain. For, besides the principal spring, which is, as it were, the parent of

all the rest, there are several smaller springs which have a distinct source, but which unite their waters with the Clitumnus, over which a bridge is thrown, separating the sacred part of the river from that which is open to general use. Above the bridge you may only go in a boat; below it, you may swim. The people of the town of Hispellum, to whom Augustus gave this place, furnish baths and lodgings at the public expense. There are several little houses on the banks, in the specially picturesque situations, and they are quite close to the water. In short, everything in the neighbourhood will give you pleasure. You may also amuse yourself with numberless inscriptions on the pillars and walls, celebrating the praises of the stream and of its tutelary divinity. Many of these you will admire, and some will make you laugh. But no; you are too cultivated a person to laugh on such an occasion.—Farewell."

Lord Orrery, who published a translation of the Letters early in the last century, in some observations on this letter, says that it reminds us of St Winifred's Well in Wales. The old temple of Clitumnus may be compared with the chapel of St Winifred, and the honours paid to the Italian god bear a resemblance to the miraculous powers popularly attributed to the old British saint.

When in the country, Pliny used to indulge in the fashionable country sports, though we should think they were not quite to his taste. Possibly his physical strength was hardly equal to the exertion which

they required. There is a decided touch of affectation in the following letter to his friend Tacitus, in which he tells him how he contrived to do literary work in the hunting-field. As Lord Orrery remarks, a thoroughbred fox-hunter would at once conclude that Pliny had no real heart for field-sports.

PLINY TO TACITUS.*

"You will laugh, and laugh you may. Your old friend, whom you know so well, has captured three magnificent boars. What! Pliny? you will say. Yes, Pliny; without, however, abandoning my indolent habits and love of repose. The nets were spread, and I sat close to them, but instead of a boar-spear or javelin, I was armed with my pen and my note-book. I mused, and put down my thoughts on paper, for I had made up my mind that if I had to return with my hands empty, my note-book should be full. There is no reason why you should despise this way of studying. You cannot conceive how much bodily exercise contributes to enliven the imagination. Besides, the solitude of the woods around you, and the perfect silence which is observed in hunting, strongly inclines the mind to thought. For the future, when you go hunting, let me advise you to take with you your papers, as well as a basket of provisions and a bottle of wine. You will then find that Minerva haunts the mountains quite as much as Diana. —Farewell."

* Epist. i. 6.

But perhaps the most interesting and important of Pliny's letters in connection with country life are those in which he describes his country houses, of which he had several. Of the two principal he gives us a very elaborate account, to which we are indebted for most of our knowledge about the character of a Roman villa. One of these was close to Ostia, about seventeen miles from Rome, facing the Tyrrhenian Sea. This Pliny calls his Laurentine, Laurentum having been the old legendary capital of Latium, and having given its name to a considerable strip of the western coast of Italy, in the neighbourhood of the mouth of the Tiber. It is not possible to identify the site of Pliny's villa, as might be expected from a circumstance which he himself tells us, that his own was only one of a great number of villas on this part of the coast. Its moderate distance from Rome made it just the place which a rich and hard-working man would select for a country seat. Pliny tells us he could transact his business in Rome, and arrive comfortably at his villa on the evening of the same day. His other principal country mansion was on a larger scale, and at a much greater distance from Rome. He always calls it his Tuscan villa. It was under the Apennine range, and the Tiber flowed through the adjacent meadows. The great Roman houses, at all events in the country, seem to have consisted of but one storey. We subjoin considerable portions of the letters in which Pliny describes his Laurentine and Tuscan villas. They are too long to be inserted in full.

PLINY TO GALLUS.*

"You wonder why I am so extremely fond of my house at Laurentum. You will wonder no longer when I make you acquainted with its attractiveness, the advantages of its situation, and the extent of shore on which it stands."

* * * * *

"It is but seventeen miles from Rome, so that I can pass my evening here without breaking in upon the business of the day. There are two roads to it; if you go by that of Laurentum you must turn off at the fourteenth milestone—if by that of Ostia, at the eleventh. Both are rather sandy, which makes them heavy for a carriage, but easy and pleasant if you go on horseback. You have a variety of landscape; sometimes your view is shut in by woods, then again it opens out into broad meadows, where numberless flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, which the inclemency of winter has driven from the mountains, grow fat and sleek during the warmth of spring in the rich pasturage.

"My house is for use, not for show. You first enter a courtyard, plain and simple without being mean, and then pass into a colonnade in the shape of the letter D, the space enclosed by which looks bright and cheerful. Here one has a capital place of retreat in bad weather, for there are windows all round it, and it is sheltered by a projection on the roof. Opposite the middle of the colonnade is a very pleasant inner court, which leads into a handsome dining-room

* Epist. ii. 17.

running out to the sea-shore. When the wind is in the south-west, its walls are gently washed by the waves which break at its foot. The room has folding-doors, or windows as large as doors, and from these you might imagine you see three different seas. From another point you look through the colonnade into the court, and see the mountains in the distance. To the left of the dining-room, a little further from the sea, is a spacious sitting-room, within that a smaller room, one side of which gets the morning and the other the afternoon sun. This I make my winter snuggery. Then comes a room, the windows of which are so arranged that they secure the sun for us during the whole day. In its walls is a bookcase for such works as can never be read too often."

Then follows a description of the bed-rooms, dressing-rooms, bath-rooms, &c., which were all on an elaborate scale. There were both hot and cold baths, and a warming-apparatus. There was also a tennis-court, warmed by the afternoon sun, at the end of which was a sort of tower. This, unlike the rest of the house, appears to have been built in storeys, and the highest storey was for the express purpose of enjoying an extensive prospect.

"The garden is chiefly planted with fig and mulberry trees, to which this soil is peculiarly favourable. Here is a dining-room, which, though it is at a distance from the sea, commands a prospect no less pleasant. Behind this room are two apartments, the

windows of which look out on the entrance to the house, and to a well-stocked kitchen-garden. You then enter a sort of cloister, which you might suppose built for public use. It has a range of windows on each side; in fair weather we open all of them; if it blows, we shut those on the exposed side, and are perfectly sheltered. In front of this colonnade is a terrace, fragrant with the scent of violets, and warmed by the reflection of the sun from the portico. We find this a very pleasant place in winter, and still more so in summer, for then it throws a shade on the terrace during the forenoon, while in the afternoon we can walk under its shade in the place of exercise, or in the adjoining part of the garden. The portico is coolest when the sun's rays strike perpendicularly on its roof. By setting open the windows, the soft western breezes have a free draught, and so the air is never close and oppressive."

One of the rooms was so contrived, that Pliny says, when he was in it, he seemed to be at a distance from his own house; and on the occasion of the feast of the Saturnalia, which gave his domestics and servants full licence to make as much noise as they liked, he found this a particularly convenient retreat.

The letter concludes with a brief description of the neighbourhood.

"Amid the conveniences and attractions of the place, there is one drawback; we want running water. However, we have wells, or rather springs, at our command. Such is the extraordinary nature of the ground, that in whatever part you dig, as soon as you have

turned up the surface of the soil, you meet with a spring of perfectly pure water, altogether free from any salt taste. The neighbouring woods supply us with fuel in abundance, and all kinds of provisions may be had from Ostia.. A man with few and simple wants might get all he required from the next village. In that little place there are three public baths, a very great convenience, in case my friends come in unexpectedly, and my bath is not ready heated and prepared. The whole coast is prettily studded with detached villas or rows of villas, which, whether you view them from the sea or the shore, look like a collection of towns. The strand is sometimes, after a long calm, perfectly smooth, though in general, by the storms driving the waves upon it, it is rough and uneven. I cannot say that we have any very fine fish, but we get excellent soles and prawns. As to other kinds of provisions, my house is better off than those which are inland, especially as to milk, for the cattle come here in great numbers to seek water and shade."

Pliny had no estate or park of any extent round his Laurentine house. In this respect his Tuscan villa contrasts advantageously with it. It was here that he liked to spend the summer months, as he did a great part of the winter at Laurentum.

His description of his Tuscan seat is equally minute as the preceding. We give portions of it.

PLINY TO DOMITIUS APOLLINARIS.*

"I sincerely thank you for your kind concern in

* Epist. v. 6.

trying to dissuade me from passing the summer on my Tuscan property, under the impression that it is an unhealthy part. It is quite true that the air of the coast is unwholesome, but my house is at a distance from the sea, under one of the Apennines which are singularly healthy. But, to relieve you from all anxiety on my account, I will describe to you the climate and character of the country, and the lovely situation of my house. I am sure you will read the description with as much pleasure as I shall give it.

"The air in winter is sharp and frosty, so that myrtles and olives, and trees which delight in warmth, will not grow there. The laurel thrives, and is remarkably beautiful, though now and then it is killed by the cold—not, however, oftener than at Rome. The summers are very temperate, and there is always a refreshing breeze, seldom high winds. To this I attribute the number of old men. If you were to see the grandfathers and great-grandfathers, and hear their stories about their ancestors, you would fancy yourself born in some former age.

"The character of the country is very beautiful. Picture to yourself an immense amphitheatre, such as only nature could create. Before you lies a broad plain, bounded by a range of mountains whose summits are covered with tall and ancient woods, which are stocked with all kinds of game for hunting. The lower slopes of the mountains are planted with underwood, among which are a number of little risings with a rich soil, on which hardly a stone is to be found. In fruitfulness they are quite equal to a

valley, and produce as good crops, though not so early in the year. Below these, on the mountain-side, is a continuous stretch of vineyards, terminated by a belt of shrubs. Then you have meadows and the open plain. The arable land is so stiff that it is necessary to go over it nine times with the biggest oxen and the strongest ploughs. The meadows are bright with flowers, and produce trefoil and other kinds of herbage as fine and tender as if it were but just sprung up. All the soil is refreshed with never-failing streams, but though there is plenty of water, there are no marshes; for as the ground is on a slope, all the water which is not absorbed runs off into the Tiber.

"This river winds through the midst of the meadows. It is navigable only in winter and in spring, and then conveys the produce of the neighbourhood to Rome. In summer it shrinks to nothing, and leaves the name of a great river to an almost empty channel. In autumn it again claims its title.

"You would be charmed by taking a view of the country from one of the neighbouring mountains. You would fancy that you were looking on the imaginary landscape of a first-rate artist; such a harmonious variety of beautiful objects meets the eye wherever it turns.

"My house commands as good a view as if it stood on the brow of the hill. You approach it by so gradual a rise that you find yourself on high ground without perceiving that you have been making an ascent. Behind, but at a considerable distance, is the Apennine range, from which, on the calmest days, we get

cool breezes. There is nothing sharp or cutting about them, as the distance is sufficient to break their violence. The greater part of the house has a southern aspect, and enjoys the afternoon sun in summer, and gets it rather earlier in winter. It is fronted by a broad and proportionately long colonnade, which has a porch of antique fashion, and in front of this colonnade is a terrace edged with box and shrubs cut into different shapes. From the terrace you descend by an easy slope to a lawn, and on each side of the descent are figures of animals in box facing each other. You then come to a shrubbery formed of the soft, I had almost said, the liquid acanthus. Round this runs a walk, shut in by evergreens shaped into every variety of form. Beyond this is a riding-ring, like a circus, which goes round the box-hedge and the dwarf-trees which are cut close."

The remainder of the letter is occupied with a very detailed description of the plan and arrangement of the house. Pliny, as he says, had made up his mind to take his friend into every nook and corner of it. We find that everything was on a splendid and luxurious scale. There are summer and winter rooms, bath and dining rooms, a tennis-court, a carriage-drive, and a hippodrome or place for horse exercise, alcoves of marble in the gardens, shaded with vines, and fountains and little rills in all directions. The garden seems to have been laid out in a somewhat stiff and formal manner; there was, however, it seems, an attempt to introduce into it an imitation of the wild

beauty of nature. It appears that the practice of cutting trees into regular shapes came into fashion among the Romans in the time of Augustus. In this garden of Pliny's Tuscan villa we find it to be a very prominent feature. We find, too, the plane-tree frequently mentioned, as well as the cypress and the box. Pliny says he had a special affection for this villa and its surroundings, as they were designed by himself. It was natural that he should take great pleasure in describing it at length. "You will hardly," he says to his friend, "think it a trouble to read the description of a place which I am persuaded would charm you were you to see it." Towards the close of this long letter he hints that he had villas at Tusculum, Tibur, Præneste,—all names familiar to persons acquainted with Latin literature. Of these villas he tells us nothing, except that he did not like them so much as his Tuscan seat. He had also, as we have mentioned, some villas on the margin of the Lake of Como. Two of these, which were his especial favourites, he playfully called "Tragedy" and "Comedy." In the following letter the names are explained.

PLINY TO ROMANUS.*

"I am glad to find by your letter that you have begun to build. I may now shelter myself under your example. I am myself building, and as I have you on my side, I have reason too. We are also alike in another respect: you are building by the sea, I am

* Epist. ix. 7.

building by Lake Larius. I have several villas on the border of this lake, but there are two in which I take most delight, and which chiefly occupy my attention. They are situated like the houses at Baiæ; one of them stands on a rock, and commands a view of the lake; the other is close to the water. I call one 'Tragedy,' because it is supported, as it were, by the high buskin; the other 'Comedy,' as resting on the humble sock. Each has its own peculiar beauties, which, from their very difference, are all the more pleasing to their owner. One has a nearer view of the lake; the other commands a wider prospect over it. The first is built along the bend of a little bay; the latter is on a cliff which runs out so as to form two bays. Here you have a straight walk, extending along the banks of the lake; there a spacious terrace, that falls towards it by a gentle descent. The former does not feel the force of the waves, the latter breaks them; from one you see people fishing below, from the other you may fish yourself, and almost throw your line from your chamber, as you lie in bed, as well as if you were in a boat. It is the beauties these villas possess which tempt me to add to them those which are wanting. But why should I give you a reason when I know that you will think it a sufficient one that I am following your example?—Farewell."

The following letter tells us how Pliny occasionally played the part of the benevolent patron in a thoroughly modern fashion. It reminds us of a church-opening, and of the luncheon which commonly succeeds it:—

PLINY TO FABATUS, HIS WIFE'S GRANDFATHER.*

"You have long been wishing to see your granddaughter and myself. We are equally anxious to see you, and are determined to delay the pleasure no longer; indeed we are actually packing up, and mean to set off as soon as the state of the roads will permit. We shall stop only once, and that for a short time. We must turn a little out of the way to go to my Tuscan property—not to look after the estate (for that might be postponed), but to perform an indispensable duty. Near my property is a town called Tifernum-on-Tiber, which put itself under my patronage when I was a mere boy, thus showing an affection for me as strong as it was undeserved. The people always celebrate my arrival with public rejoicings, express sorrow when I leave them, and are delighted whenever they hear of my preferment to office. To show my gratitude to them (for it is a shame to be outdone in friendly feeling) I built them a temple at my own expense, and as it is finished, it would be a sort of impiety to delay its consecration any longer. We shall be there on the day fixed for the ceremony, and I intend to celebrate it with a public banquet. Perhaps we may stay there the next day, but in that case we shall make all the more haste in our journey. May we have the happiness to find you and your daughter in good health, for I am sure we shall find you in good spirits if we arrive safely.—Farewell."

* Epist. iv. 1.

CHAPTER XI.

PLINY IN HIS PROVINCE.

In A.D. 103, the sixth year of Trajan's reign, Pliny was appointed governor of the provinces known as Bithynia and Pontus, or Pontica, as it was also called. He bore the title of Legatus and Proprætor, and he had the consular power. He had, in short, the highest rank and position with which a Roman governor could be invested. It would seem that he did not actually arrive in his province till the middle of the September of the year. He landed after a pleasant voyage at Ephesus, and thence had a rather tiresome and disagreeable journey during excessive heat to Pergamos, where he stopped a while. His health, never very strong, had been shaken by a serious illness in the preceding year. His life, he tells the Emperor in one of his letters, had been in danger, and he availed himself of a mode of treatment which we may presume was much in fashion at the time. He procured the services of a medical practitioner who cured many of his patients by the simple process of rubbing and anointing. So much good did he derive from the remedy prescribed,

that, with the gratitude which he always felt for a kindness, he asked the Emperor to grant to the physician, who was probably either a Jew or a Greek, the freedom of the city of Alexandria, and also the privileges of Roman citizenship. His province was an important one: Its administration at this particular time required tact and ability. It contained several considerable towns, to the prosperity of which, it would appear, the imperial government had greatly contributed. Some of them, as Neocæsareia, or Nicæa, where the famous ecclesiastical council was held in A.D. 314, were of comparatively recent origin. There were also the free cities of Chalcedon, Nicomedeia, Amisus, and Trapezus, and the colonies of Heracleia and Sinope. The district had the elements of wealth; parts of it, especially towards the coast, were extremely productive; and it had iron mines. Its population must have been of a very mixed character, with Greek ideas and civilisation diffused throughout it. And in Pliny's time, as we shall see, Christianity had gained a strong hold on the people, and was a fact of the highest importance.

Pliny had unquestionably many both of the moral and intellectual qualities which go to make a good and wise ruler. He had carefully cultivated a habit of sympathy, and his tendency was to be as gentle and merciful as possible. He was, as we should say, thoroughly tolerant and liberal. He was particularly fond of everything Greek; and, as we have seen, he especially delighted in the society of Greek rhetoricians and philosophers. In the following letter his love and

admiration of Greece and its culture are strikingly displayed. Like a well-known letter of Cicero to his brother Quintus, it is a letter of advice to a friend who was about to enter on the government of Achaia, and had already earned credit as the governor of Bithynia..

PLINY TO MAXIMUS.*

"My friendship for you constrains me, I will not say to give you directions (for you do not require them), but to remind you of what you already know, so that you may put it in practice, and even know it more thoroughly. Consider that you are sent to the province of Achaia, that true and genuine Greece, whence civilisation, literature, even agriculture, are believed to have taken their origin,—sent to regulate the condition of free cities, whose inhabitants are men in the best sense of the word—free men of the noblest kind, inasmuch as they have maintained the freedom which nature gives as a right, by their virtues, by their good actions, and by the securities of alliance and solemn obligation. Revere the gods who founded their state; revere the glory of their ancient days, even that old age itself, which, as in men it claims respect, is in cities altogether sacred. Honour their old traditions, their great deeds, even their legends. Grant to every one his full dignity, freedom—yes, and the indulgence of his vanity. Keep ever before you the fact that it was this land which gave us our laws—gave them to us, not as a conquered people, but at our own

* Epist. viii. 24.

request. It is Athens, remember, to which you go,—it is Lacedæmon you will have to govern; and to take from such states the shadow and the surviving name of liberty would be a cruel and barbarous act. You see that physicians treat the free with more tenderness than slaves, though their disorder may be the same. Remember what each of these states has been, but so remember as not to despise them for being no longer what they were. Show no pride or arrogance; and yet do not be afraid that you will fall into contempt. Can he who is invested with power, and has the insignia of authority, be despised, unless he first shows that he despises himself by being mean and avaricious? Power is ill proved by insult; ill can terror command respect; far more efficacious is love in procuring submission than fear. Terror vanishes with your absence, while love remains; the former turns to hatred, the latter to reverence. You must therefore again and again call to mind the meaning of your title, and make yourself fully understand what a great work is the government of free cities. For what can be better for society than such government; what can be more precious than freedom? Again, what could be more shameful than to turn the first into anarchy, the last into slavery?"

We may be pretty sure that Pliny tried to govern his province on the principles here laid down. From his correspondence with Trajan, he would seem to have combined kindness with energy. A Roman governor had very great powers, and a very wide latitude given

him. He commanded the army, and he had to hear and decide causes. He had to impose the taxes, and take care that they were collected. Much, one would suppose, must have been left to the governor's discretion. Pliny's letters to Trajan, however, do not bear out this impression. He would appear to have thought that he was not justified in dealing with the most ordinary matters without appealing to the Emperor. Very possibly this may have been the general tone of a Roman governor at this time. Pliny, however, carried it so far that we think he must have been wanting in that self-reliance without which a man cannot be even a subordinate of the highest order. Trajan, no doubt, liked and esteemed Pliny; yet on one occasion he gives him a gentle reproof. The people of Nicæa had undertaken to build a theatre; and when £80,000 had been spent, it was found that the walls were cracked from top to bottom, either from the foundation being laid on marshy ground, or from the bad quality of the stones. Pliny asks the Emperor whether in his opinion the work should be finished, or entirely abandoned. This seems to imply a very strict system of imperialism, or such a question would have been utterly absurd. The Emperor hints very plainly that Pliny must decide for himself. "You are on the spot," he says in his answer, "and are the best person to consider and determine what had better be done in the matter." The town of Nicæa, it would appear, did not manage its affairs very well. Pliny tells us in the same letter that it was rebuilding, on an enlarged plan, a gymnasium which

had been burnt down before his arrival in the province. They had already incurred a considerable, and, as it turned out, a useless expense. The structure was not only very irregular and ill arranged, but a second architect who had been called in, and who was a rival of the original architect, declared that the walls, though they were twenty-two feet thick, were not strong enough to support the fabric, not having been properly cemented. It seems strange that Pliny should write to the Emperor about such details. The explanation is to be sought in the fact, that a grant from the imperial treasury was occasionally made to supplement the deficiencies of local resources. Trajan in his reply shows the contempt of a soldier for the trifling amusements of the Greeks. "These paltry Greeks, I know, are extravagantly fond of gymnastic diversions; and therefore, perhaps, the citizens of Nicæa have planned a more magnificent building for this purpose than is necessary. However, they must be contented with such as will be sufficient to answer the use for which it is intended."

Only a very few of Pliny's letters to Trajan refer to matters of great interest or importance. In one he recommends a friend with a testimonial to the Emperor; in another he explains some slight deviation from ordinary routine; in by far the larger number he writes about purely local matters, which, with our ideas, it would seem almost an impertinence to refer to a ruler who was many hundred miles distant. One of them is interesting as an illustration of the extreme jealousy of Roman imperialism, and its dread of anything like

secret societies. It reminds us of our trades-unions and working men's associations. A destructive fire had broken out in the city of Nicomedeia, and the people, instead of trying to extinguish it, looked on as idle and indifferent spectators. There were no engines or buckets at hand—no means, in short, of putting a stop to the fire. It occurred to Pliny that it would be advisable to form an association of firemen, limited however to 150 members. This very moderate proposal does not commend itself to the Emperor. In his reply he tells Pliny that it is to be remembered that such societies have greatly disturbed the peace of the province. "Whatever name we give them," he says, "and for whatever purpose they may be established, they are sure to become factious combinations, however short their meetings may be."

From another of Pliny's letters it appears that the people of this same town were as careless in their management of public money as those of Nicæa. They had spent a great sum on an aqueduct, and left it so unfinished that it actually fell to pieces. The same fate attended a second attempt, so that the town after a vast expenditure was still without water. Pliny tells the Emperor that he has himself visited a spring from which the water can be brought, and that the work can be constructed with the old materials, but that it is really of the first importance that they should have an architect from Rome to superintend the affair, and guarantee them against a recurrence of failure. "The usefulness and greatness of the work," he adds, "is fully worthy of your reign." Trajan's reply is

short and to the point. He tells Pliny that he ought to find out whose fault it is that so much money has been thrown away; and he plainly hints that the jobbery of the townspeople among themselves has been the cause of the disaster.

Trajan's reign, as we know, was a great time for the construction of aqueducts, and several of Pliny's letters concern this subject. The inhabitants of the colony of Sinope were badly off for water, and it could only be conveyed into the town from a distance of sixteen miles. Pliny consults the Emperor, and tells him that he believes the money can be raised on the spot, if he, the Emperor, is willing to concede such an indulgence to the thirsty townspeople. Trajan's reply is favourable; the work, he says, will conduce to the health and beauty of the place. Public baths, too, were much in request at this time, and no town was thought to be complete without them. This was a matter which Pliny referred to the Emperor. The people of Prusa wanted new baths, and Pliny found that there was a very eligible site in a spot now occupied by the ruins of what had been a noble mansion. Part of it, it seemed, had been designed by the owner to be a temple in honour of the Emperor Claudius; the remainder was to be leased out for the benefit of the town. Pliny suggests that the entire site had better be given or sold to the town, and public baths constructed on it. Trajan's answer shows that he was not without religious scruples. "You have not," he says, "distinctly told me whether a temple to Claudius was actually erected on the spot; if so, though it has fallen down, the soil

on which it stood is still sacred." We have an amusing instance of a sanitary matter being brought by Pliny under the Emperor's notice. A town, by name Amastria, had, among many other beauties, a remarkably fine street of great length, by the side of which there ran what was dignified with the name of a river, but what was in reality a nasty sewer, as foul to the sight as it was to the smell. Pliny thought it necessary to tell Trajan that it ought to be covered up, and that this should be done if the Emperor would sanction the necessary expenditure. If all Roman governors referred such matters to the Emperor, centralisation must have been carried to a preposterous extent.

Trajan's objection to so simple a thing as the formation of a kind of fire brigade, gives us a clue to the general attitude of imperialism towards the most important phenomenon of the age. Christianity, indeed, had now become a fact which could not escape the notice of an observant ruler, and towards which no one penetrated with the true spirit of Roman policy could preserve a friendly or even an indifferent attitude. For Roman tolerance, though in one sense very wide, was yet restricted by well-defined limits. To every conquered country it accorded the right of worshipping, without molestation, its own gods. In legal language, each national faith became "a lawful religion" (*religio licita*). But this religion might, strictly speaking, be practised only within its natural limits. To this rule there were, of course, large exceptions. It would have been a great hardship on a Roman subject, pursuing some lawful occupation elsewhere than in his native

country, if he had been forbidden to worship after his own manner. In Rome especially, where strangers from all the world were assembled, the rule was relaxed, even to a degree which sometimes—as when, for instance, the worship of the Egyptian Isis was forbidden—called forth the interference of the state. Of all recognised religions, none was more commonly to be seen flourishing in foreign countries than that of the Jews. And it was with this religion of the Jews that Christianity was, for the early years of its existence, confounded by all but the best-informed observer. It shared the reverses of what may be called the mother faith, as we may see in the banishment of Aquila and Priscilla; but it also shared its immunities. It was not long, however, before the distinction between the two began to be noticed. Christianity was the more active, and therefore the more offensive, of the kindred faiths. This unpopularity must have become sufficiently marked when Nero selected the Christians to bear the weight of the popular rage, which had been roused by the destruction of Rome. Titus, if we may trust the speech which Sulpicius Severus—borrowing probably from Tacitus—puts into his mouth, recognised the difference, though he thought the two religions to be so intimately connected that the overthrow of the headquarters of the one would lead to the ruin of the other.* The language quoted below displays the

* The occasion of the speech was the council held, after the capture of Jerusalem, to determine the fate of the Temple. It runs thus:—"On the other hand, some, Titus himself among them, were of opinion that the Temple, more than anything

growth of that feeling of suspicion and hostility which was about to bear fruit in more than two centuries of persecution. Titus does not seem in his short reign to have taken any steps for giving effect to his feelings about the new faith. Possibly he believed that what he had done in the destruction of Jerusalem would suffice. Domitian's capricious tyranny was not likely to be peculiarly formidable to the Christians, though it seems probable the informers—of whom we have heard as being peculiarly active in his reign—took occasion to bring against some of them the accusation of atheism. Trajan was a vigorous ruler, full of the traditions of Roman policy; and it was inevitable that he should come into collision with the great Society which had now extended into all the provinces of the empire. To him it seemed a secret society of the most dangerous character. It had no home of its own to which it could point as its national seat. It claimed to embrace all nations in a strange brotherhood, which seemed to be, as indeed it really was, the rival of that empire which also claimed to be coextensive with the world. With Pliny's famous letter on the subject, and Trajan's reply, we conclude this chapter.

else, must be destroyed, that so the Jewish and the Christian superstition might be thoroughly eradicated. These superstitions, though mutually opposed, had had their origin in the same people. The Christians had risen up from among the Jews; if the root was removed, the stem would soon perish." The contradiction between this and the account given by Josephus, who attributes the conflagration of the Temple to his own countrymen, is remarkable.

PLINY TO THE EMPEROR.*

"It is my invariable rule to refer to you in all matters about which I feel doubtful. Who can better remove my doubts or inform my ignorance? I have never been present at any trials of Christians, so that I do not know what is the nature of the charge against them, or what is the usual punishment. Whether any difference or distinction is made between the young and persons of mature years—whether repentance of their fault entitles them to pardon—whether the very profession of Christianity, unaccompanied by any criminal act, or whether only the crime itself involved in the profession, is a subject of punishment; on all these points I am in great doubt. Meanwhile, as to those persons who have been charged before me with being Christians, I have observed the following method. I asked them whether they were Christians; if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice, and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished. I could not doubt that whatever might be the nature of their opinions, such inflexible obstinacy deserved punishment. Some were brought before me, possessed with the same infatuation, who were Roman citizens; these I took care should be sent to Rome. As often happens, the accusation spread, from being followed, and various phases of it came under my notice. An anonymous information was laid before me, containing a great number of names. Some said they neither were and

* Epist. x. 97, 98.

never had been Christians; they repeated after me an invocation of the gods, and offered wine and incense before your statue (which I had ordered to be brought for that purpose, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ; whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into any of these acts. These I thought ought to be discharged. Some among them, who were accused by a witness in person, at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it; the rest owned that they had once been Christians, but had now (some above three years, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) renounced the profession. They all worshipped your statue and those of the gods, and uttered imprecations against the name of Christ. They declared that their offence or crime was summed up in this, that they met on a stated day before daybreak, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for any wicked purpose, but never to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, never to break their word, or to deny a trust when called on to deliver it up: after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, and to eat together a harmless meal. From this custom, however, they desisted after the proclamation of my edict, by which, according to your command, I forbade the meeting of any assemblies. In consequence of their declaration, I judged it necessary to try to get at the real truth by putting to the torture two female slaves, who were said to officiate in their religious rites; but all I could

discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition. And so I adjourned all further proceedings in order to consult you. It seems to me a matter deserving your consideration, more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks, ages, and of both sexes. The contagion of the superstition is not confined to the cities, it has spread into the villages and the country. Still I think it may be checked. At any rate, the temples which were almost abandoned again begin to be frequented, and the sacred rites, so long neglected, are revived, and there is also a general demand for victims for sacrifice, which till lately found very few purchasers. From all this it is easy to conjecture what numbers might be reclaimed, if a general pardon were granted to those who repent of their error."

The following is the Emperor's reply:—

TRAJAN TO PLINY.

"You have adopted the right course in investigating the charges made against the Christians who were brought before you. It is not possible to lay down any general rule for all such cases. Do not go out of your way to look for them. If they are brought before you, and the offence is proved, you must punish them, but with this restriction, that when the person denies that he is a Christian, and shall make it evident that he is not by invoking the gods, he is to be pardoned,

notwithstanding any former suspicion against him. Anonymous informations ought not to be received in any sort of prosecution. It is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and is quite foreign to the spirit of our age."

Pliny remained in his province two years, and then returned to Rome.

CHAPTER XII.

PLINY'S OPINIONS AND HABITS.

PLINY'S time, as we have seen, was divided between Rome and the country. At Rome he was a busy man. He was an advocate in considerable practice; he was a member of the senate, and took a lively interest in all its proceedings; and he was evidently much in request in fashionable and literary society. Often would he have to hurry away from the court in which he had been pleading, to hear and criticise the composition of one of his many friends. He was, too, we should suppose, a man of genial and social temper, and was never unwilling to accept an invitation to dinner, provided he thought the conversation and the general character of the entertainment was likely to have about it a refined and elegant tone. The banquets of the vulgar rich, though occasionally he may have found it advisable to attend them, he despised and detested.

Country life, with its quiet and repose, he really enjoyed—perhaps all the more from the weakness of his constitution, which no doubt sometimes succumbed to the fatigues of city life. He had an eye for the

beautiful scenery of Italy; and it would seem, to judge from his minute descriptions, that he felt a genuine pride and pleasure in the arrangement of his gardens. He is continually telling us in his letters how peculiarly favourable he found the country to meditation and to literary work; and it was in the retirement of one or other of his numerous villas that he used to revise his various compositions. If we may judge from one or two allusions, he was partial to the quiet amusement of fishing. Hunting he regarded as good for the refreshment of the mind rather than as a pleasure in itself. A gentle ride or stroll were much more to his taste than any such violent exercise. In the following letter he gives us a pleasant picture of the way in which he passed his time at his Tuscan villa:—

PLINY TO FUSCUS.*

"You wish to know how I dispose of my time in the summer at my Tuscan villa. I wake without being called, generally about six o'clock, sometimes earlier, but seldom later. My windows remain shut, as I find the darkness and quiet have a very happy effect on the mind. Being thus withdrawn from all objects which call off the attention, I am left to my own thoughts, and instead of suffering my mind to wander with my eyes, I keep my eyes in subjection to my mind. If I have any literary work on hand, I think over it, and revise the style and expression, just as if I had my pen in my hand. Thus I get through more or less work, according as the subject is more or less difficult, and I

* Epist. vii. 9.

find my memory able to retain it. Then I call for my amanuensis, and having opened the windows, I dictate to him what I have composed; then I dismiss him for a while, and call him in again. About ten or eleven (for I do not observe any fixed hour), according to the weather, I walk on the terrace or in the colonnade, and then I think over or dictate what I had left unfinished. Then I have a drive, and employ myself as before, and find this change of scene refreshing to my mind, and it enables me to apply it with more vigour. On my return I take a short nap; then I stroll out, and repeat aloud a Greek or Latin speech, not so much to strengthen my voice as my digestion, though my voice is improved at the same time. I then have another stroll, take my usual exercise, and bathe. At dinner, if I have only my wife or a few friends with me, a book is read to us, and after dinner we have some music or a little play acted. Then I walk out with my friends, among whom are some men of learning. Thus we pass the evening in various conversation, and the day, even when it is at the longest, soon comes to an end. Sometimes I make a little change in this order. If I have remained in bed, or taken a longer walk than usual, I have a ride instead of a drive, after having read aloud one or two speeches. Thus I get more exercise in less time. My friends now and then look in upon me from the neighbouring villages, and occasionally, when I am tired, their visits are a pleasant relief. Sometimes I hunt, but I always take my notebook with me, so that if I get no sport, I may at any rate bring something back with me. Part of my time

is given to my tenants, though not so much as they would like. Their rustic squabbles make me return with fresh zest to my studies and more cultivated occupations."

There is an amusing letter, creditable to the writer's good taste and feeling, in which Pliny tells us how he treated his guests when he gave a dinner-party. It was common enough among the rich men of the time —those, of course, especially who had suddenly acquired wealth by disreputable means—to draw very marked distinctions in the company when they entertained. Readers of Juvenal will remember his laughable description of Virro's party, how the great man treated his poorer and less important guests with conspicuous contempt. The dishes set before them contained the coarsest and most indigestible fare, the wine was like vinegar, and a slave stood over them to see that they did not attempt to pocket some of the jewels with which the drinking-cups were adorned. It was once Pliny's misfortune to have to dine, as a comparative stranger, with a man like Virro, who thought himself (so Pliny says) an exceedingly elegant and attentive host, but who really combined expense with stinginess. There were three kinds of wine; the best he reserved for himself and Pliny, the next best for his inferior friends, while the worst was given to his freedmen and to those of Pliny, who, it appears, were present. One of the guests who sat by Pliny observed the arrangement, and turning round asked him what he thought of it, and whether he approved of it. Pliny shook

his head. "Well, then, what do you do on such occasions?" "I give all my guests the same wine," said Pliny, "for when I ask them to dinner, I look on my freedmen as my guests, and forget that they were once slaves." The letter in which this anecdote occurs is addressed to Junius Avitus, who, it seems, was a young man at the time, just entering into fashionable society. "Take care," says Pliny, "that you avoid above everything this new-fangled idea of combining a show of splendour with actual meanness: either, by itself, is bad enough; when combined, they are simply disgusting."

In a letter, in which he accepts an invitation to dinner, he says to his friend: "I must have a clear understanding with you that your dinner is not to be very long and elaborate; only let there be plenty of the sort of conversation in which Socrates and his friends indulged themselves, and even that must be limited as to time, since I have official engagements early in the morning." Once one of Pliny's friends, who had promised to dine with him, disappointed him. "I will bring an action against you," Pliny replies, "and I will lay my damages at a high amount." He then describes the *menu*, which seems to have been singularly light, fruits and vegetables largely preponderating in it. Still, Pliny says there were attractions of no mean kind. There was to have been a reading, or some acting, or some music, perhaps all in succession. He playfully hints that his friend would have preferred a less refined entertainment. From what we know of him we can thoroughly believe what

he says to his friend in conclusion: "You may have a more splendid and expensive dinner in many houses; there is not one in which you can dine with more cheerful accompaniments, and feel yourself more at ease, than in mine."

Pliny's tastes were altogether those of a cultivated man. Many men of the time, no doubt, resembled him, and thoroughly hated the vulgarity which they so often saw associated with enormous wealth. One of the chief, and in popular estimation one of the most attractive, features of life in Rome was the annual celebration of the great games—the games of the circus, as they were called—during the first days of September. In one of Pliny's letters we have his general opinion about them, which was substantially the same as that of the man he admired so much—Cicero. He is writing to a friend who had very possibly wondered how Pliny, whom he knew to be in Rome, came to be absent from the seats allotted to the senators for the grand spectacle. He had passed, he says, all the time amid his books and papers, and had thoroughly enjoyed the quiet. The games, he says, have really nothing in them which one would care to see more than once. Even the spectators, he hints, are not so much drawn by the attractions of the sight itself as by a spirit of gambling, to which a wide scope had been given in Domitian's reign by the chariot-races, and the six companies which engaged in them, and divided the popular sympathies. Yet it is certain that many of the best men of the time frequently witnessed these spectacles. Very possibly a senator who was never seen

in his place would have been a marked man, and incurred actual peril. Even in the better times of imperialism it may have been unadvisable for a man of rank and position to have seemed to protest by his habitual absence against so popular an amusement. The letter from which we have been quoting may, and we think, probably did, reflect Pliny's genuine sentiments; but, at the same time, we must admit that it looks a little as if he was anxious to impress his friend with the delicacy and refinement of his tastes. He is certainly inconsistent with himself when we find him in another letter praising a friend who had exhibited a magnificent spectacle of gladiators at Verona, and expressing his regret that the African leopards which had been purchased for the show were detained by stress of weather, and arrived too late.

It does not appear that Pliny had any definite philosophical opinions. He liked the society of philosophers as agreeable and intellectual men, but he never shows any trace of having adopted the dogmas of either Stoicism or Epicureanism. Had he done so, we may feel sure that his communicative disposition would not have allowed him to conceal his preference. He was of too gentle and sympathising a temper to attach himself decidedly to any one set of opinions. It would be interesting to know what he thought about Providence, about the direction of human affairs, and about such questions as a future state and the immortality of the soul. All these subjects he must have heard discussed from the most various points of view. It seems very unlikely that he had any matured

opinions about them. Sometimes in his letters we come across passages which look as if he believed in the unseen world, and in the possibility of occasional revelations from it. His mind appears to have had what we may call a religious basis. There is a very remarkable letter which strikingly reminds us of a modern ghost-story. It is an anecdote about a haunted house. There was a house at Athens which had long been deserted because frightful noises were heard in it during the stillness of night, and the apparition of a grisly old man, with a long and unkempt beard, who had chains on his hands and feet, and rattled them in a horrible manner, was to be seen in one of its desolate chambers. It remained, as may be supposed, unlet, till a philosopher, by name Athenodorus, came to Athens, and professed his willingness to take the house; all the more, says Pliny, because of its evil repute. He at once became the tenant, and as he sat the first evening in one of the outer rooms, he concentrated his whole attention on his philosophical studies. Surrounded with his books and papers, he felt sure that his imagination would not be distracted by any idle and unreal terrors. In the silence of midnight he hears the clanking of chains, and though he fixes his mind yet more steadily on his work, the noise increases, and seems to be on the threshold of his chamber. He looks behind him and sees the apparition, which makes signs to him, and on his again returning to his paper, stands over him as he writes, shaking and rattling its fetters. Again he looks behind him, takes a light, and follows the figure. The spectre moves

slowly, as though encumbered by the weight of the chains; then it turns aside into the courtyard and vanishes. The philosopher marks the place of its disappearance with some leaves. The next day he goes to the magistrates and asks them to have the spot dug up. Some bones are found belonging to a corpse which had long since rotted in the earth, with chains attached to them. These are carefully collected, and are then publicly interred, after which the house is perfectly free from the apparition. Pliny's comment on this strange story is as follows: "I believe the word of those who affirm all this." The tone of this letter would certainly suggest to us that Pliny would have been inclined to accept the alleged marvels of modern spiritualism. At the close of it he relates two singular incidents which had come within his own knowledge, and to which he attributed great significance. One of his freedmen was sleeping in the same bed with his younger brother. The latter dreamt that he saw some one sitting on the couch, who with a pair of scissors approached his head and cut off some locks of hair. In the morning he found that the top of his head was shorn, and he saw the hair on the ground. On another occasion one of Pliny's slaves was sleeping with several of his companions in the slaves' dormitory. Two men clothed in white appeared to him to enter the room by the window, and to clip his locks as he lay in bed. They then disappeared. The morning showed that the dream was a reality; the scattered locks of hair were to be seen round the boy. Pliny half looked on these two incidents as omens which

pointed to his fortunate escape of the fate of many of his friends under Domitian. "Nothing particularly noteworthy," he says, "followed, except perhaps the circumstance that in Domitian's time I was never the subject of an accusation, though I should have been had Domitian, during whose reign these incidents occurred, lived longer. A paper was found in his desk in which was written an accusation against me by Carus Metius." "Hence one may conjecture," he adds, "that, since accused persons usually let their hair grow long, the cutting off of my two slaves' hair was an intimation of the averting of a peril which was hanging over me." Pliny had no doubt much good sense, yet one would infer from all this that he was by no means without a taint of superstition. The age, it must be remembered, while sceptical and unbelieving in one sense, was also addicted to marvels and prodigies; and the best and wisest men, having no distinct and definite assurance about the mysteries of the unseen world, could not rise above some of the lower and weaker tendencies of the period.

We see from Pliny's Letters that suicide was very frequent among the Romans of his time. His friend Corellius Rufus, and the rich and luxurious Silius Italicus, had both died a voluntary death with the most cool and deliberate purpose. He also tells, with manifest approval, the story of a most determined act of suicide which had happened in the neighbourhood of his own native town. He had been sailing with an elderly friend on the Lake of Como, and had had pointed out to him a house with a chamber projecting over the

water, from which a lady, a native of Comum, had thrown herself together with her husband. The man was afflicted with a painful and incurable disease, and his wife, convinced of the hopelessness of his recovery, urged him to die, and was, in Pliny's words, "his companion in death, nay, more, his guide, his example, and the constraining cause of the deed." She bound herself to him, and both perished together. Pliny wonders that he never before heard of the incident. The action, he says, was equal to the splendid self-devotion of Arria, but the actor was less famous. We can understand how much there was in the circumstances of the imperial period, even in its brighter days, to render the interest in life less vivid than with ourselves. The very luxury with which a wealthy Roman was as a matter of course surrounded may well have become tiresome and oppressive, and a comparatively slight cause may have been enough to prevail on him to escape from its *ennui*. On the whole, the teachings of the Stoic philosophy encouraged a healthier view of life, and no doubt braced up many who were wavering to bear with patience present ills and troubles. Pliny seems to have generally approved this aspect of Stoicism. One of his friends was suffering from a tedious and severe illness, and had made up his mind that, if the physicians should pronounce it incurable, he would put an end to his life. Should, however, there be a prospect of ultimate recovery, he was determined to bear with it, though it might be long and painful; this, he thought, he owed to his wife, to his daughter, to his friends, and, among others, to Pliny. His resolution is heartily commended

by Pliny as in the highest degree noble and praiseworthy. "To rush on death," he says, "in a rash and headlong fashion, is a vulgar and commonplace act; to weigh and anxiously consider the various motives which urge one to it, and to choose between life and death according to the guidance of reason, is the mark of a great mind." He thus satisfies himself with a sort of compromise, leaning, however, to the better view, from which the Stoics in theory allowed no exception.

Imperialism is necessarily unfavourable to the development of political opinions. Those of Pliny were perhaps somewhat colourless. It would have been absurd affectation in him to have professed attachment to the old republican ideas, which he as well as Tacitus knew could not possibly be revived.

In the senate, indeed, which still preserved something of its old state, if not of its power, he always felt the liveliest interest. He frequently speaks of its proceedings, and expresses no little delight and pride when these really possessed something of the importance which accorded with the nominal dignity of the assembly. More than once he mentions measures which were being taken, either by its own or by the Emperor's action, to increase its efficiency. One of these passages bears so closely on a subject which is just now on the surface in our own political life, that, though it has recently been quoted more than once, we must not omit it. Open voting in the election to offices of state had caused, it seems, in the senate, proceedings so un-

dignified, and even disgraceful, that recourse was had to the ballot. "I fear," says Pliny, "lest, as time goes on, abuses spring up from this very remedy of ours. There is a danger lest, when our votes are silent, a want of honourable feeling come upon us. For how few are equally careful of honour in secret and in public! Many stand in awe of public opinion, few of conscience."

But it was to the Emperor, as the real power in the state, that he was compelled to look. Under a ruler like Trajan he may well have sincerely believed that freedom and order were so united as to make the prospects of the Roman world really hopeful. His Panegyric of Trajan has unquestionably an unpleasant tone of flattery running through its artificial and elaborate sentences; and it is, we feel, the last of his compositions from which we should wish to form an estimate of him. Still, there can be no reason for doubting that it reflected Pliny's genuine political sentiments. There is a perpetual contrast between Trajan's beneficent rule and Domitian's hideous tyranny. Thought and speech were now free, fear unknown; it was easy and pleasant to obey. The world was happy and contented, and every stranger was anxious to obtain the safeguard and privileges of Roman citizenship. The comfort and prosperity of the provinces were anxiously studied. "How must every province," says Pliny, "rejoice in being under our protection, now that a prince is on the throne able and willing to transfer from one region to another

the produce of the earth—a prince who purveys for lands separated from Rome by seas and continents, as he provides for the capital itself. Nowhere is the climate so constant as to insure universal fertility, but Cæsar has it in his power to correct the season's caprice; and although he cannot make a blighted or barren tract immediately fruitful, he can arrest the hand of famine. That we should have one master over us is infinitely better for us than a freedom full of strife and discord." Pliny's good-nature, and wish to see people happy and comfortable, naturally inclined him to think well of a government which secured for the world at large so many material advantages, while it allowed the men of cultivation and of letters to express their thoughts as freely as his friend Tacitus was able to do in his Annals and History.

Of Pliny's last days, of even the date of his death, we know nothing. We gather that he was alive A.D. 107 from one of the Letters, in which he complains that ten years after the death of Verginius Rufus (who died A.D. 97) the monument which ought to have been erected over his grave was still unfinished. Pliny was then in his forty-seventh year. The Letters were published in his lifetime, and as no later allusion to contemporary events occurs in them, their appearance may be conjecturally attributed to that or the following year. From that time he disappears entirely from our sight. It is not without pain that we take so abrupt a leave of one of the most interesting characters of antiquity. We cannot, indeed, call him a man of genius;

and we may trace some weak lines in the portrait which he has painted for us of himself. But it would not be easy to find in ancient literature, or indeed in modern, one who approaches more closely to the best modern ideal of a well-bred, cultivated, blameless gentleman.

END OF PLINY'S LETTERS.

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